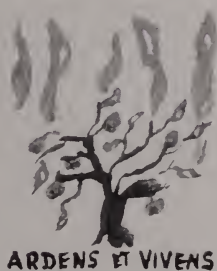


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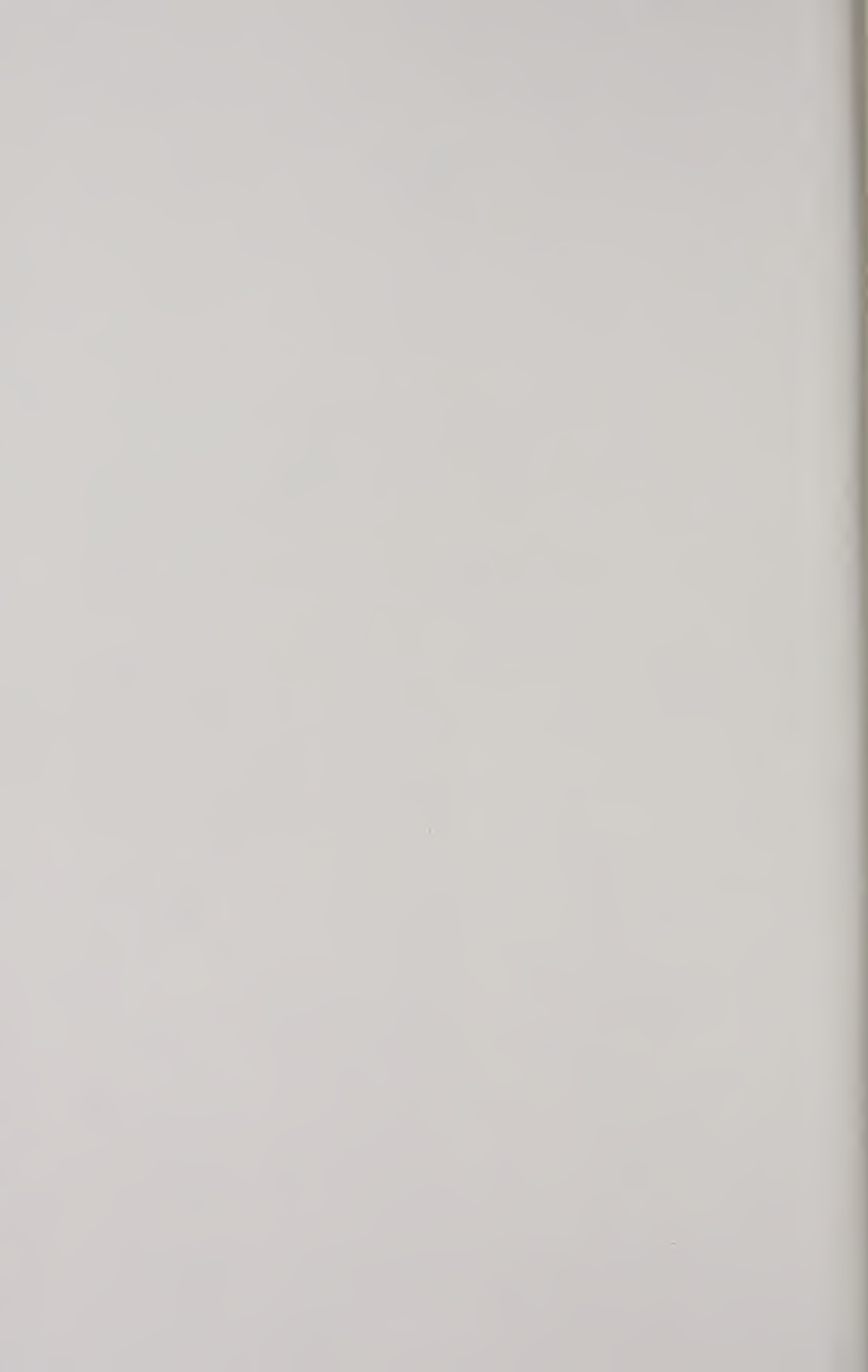
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RICHARD BAXTER'S
UNDERSTANDING
OF INFANT BAPTISM



RICHARD BAXTER'S
UNDERSTANDING
OF INFANT BAPTISM

HANS BOERSMA



PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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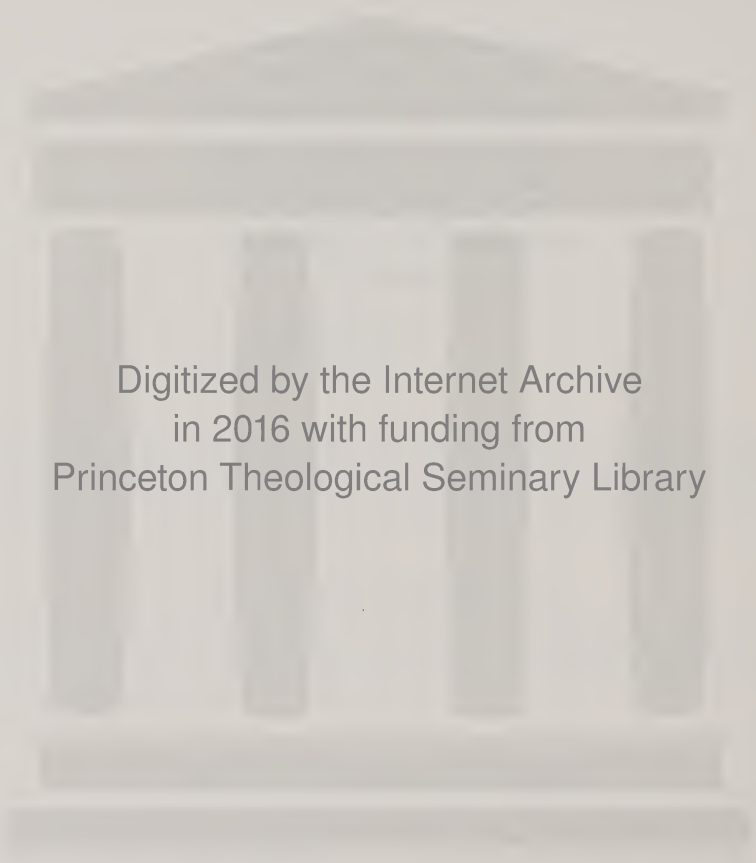
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My Christ did lovingly invite
Me to his charming Feast;
He added to his wond'rous Love,
Made me a willing [*sic*] Guest.
I came and found a Banquet rare,
He brought me Angels food,
He bid me take and eat my fill,
For my Eternal good.

—Richard Baxter
Monthly Preparations



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Editor's Foreword

One can only smile when seventeenth-century western Europe is thought to have been a relatively settled and prosperous time, a judgment that is accompanied by a supposedly clinching referral to Baroque music and architecture. In fact, the better the century is known, the more striking its extraordinary upheavals and concomitant accomplishments in science, literature, philosophy, economics, geography, political theory and practice—and gloriously varied music. That was true also of developments in Reformed theology and polity in Great Britain and New England. One has only to think of Milton, the Westminster Divines, and of pastor theologians such as Richard Baxter. These were remarkably versatile leaders, forced to rethink topic after topic as the congregations they shepherded made it through the Civil War and the demands of successive ecclesiastical polities.

There were many faces to Reformed theology in this period, and one of the reasons for the variety was the fact that they all took seriously the category of covenant for understanding the nature of the Christian community and its place in the quest for a free and just political order. The disagreements were often bitter—partly the result of many economic and social factors, and partly the result of the very seriousness with which pastors and congregations sought to work out what it means to be dealt with by a covenanting God. The issue of infant baptism became a thread pulling on which one saw the tapestry of ecclesiology radically altered. It is this that Professor Boersma deals with in this monograph, and in doing so exposes the reader to the care and ingenuity with which Reformed divines of that century treated a subject whose importance has not diminished today.

I would like to take this opportunity to add my voice to the tributes paid to the late Heiko Oberman, an editorial consultant to *Studies in Reformed Theology and History* since the monograph series' inception. His energetic affection for examining freshly the relation between Late Medieval theology

and Reformation movements proved contagious for those who studied with him. No less inspiring were the candid dignity, the stubborn will to live, and the gracious provision with which he and his family dealt with his illness, death, and services of thanksgiving.

—David Willis

Abbreviations

See bibliography for publishing information.

BC	<i>Baxter Correspondence</i>
BDBRSC	<i>Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century</i>
BQ	<i>Baptist Quarterly</i>
BSABR	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra and American Biblical Repository</i>
BSTR	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review</i>
CCRB	N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, <i>Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter</i>
CR	A. G. Matthews, <i>Calamy Revised</i>
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
DWL	Doctor Williams's Library, London
GBD	<i>General Biographical Dictionary</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
NeAKG	<i>Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis</i>
RB	<i>Reliquiæ Baxterianæ</i>
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
TBHS	<i>Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society</i>

Preface

The seventeenth century was an age of theological conflict. Few theologians, however, were as embroiled in polemical discussion as Richard Baxter (1615–1691).¹ This mediating Reformed divine, well known for his practical writings and his pastoral successes in Kidderminster, was constantly the center of theological dispute. Baxter's controversies surrounding the doctrine of justification are most noteworthy in this regard.² The controversies surrounding Baxter extend beyond this issue, however. The present study addresses another important area of disagreement. Repeatedly, Baxter feels the need to defend also his understanding of the sacraments against what he regards as the extremes of antipaedobaptism and sacramentalism. Of course, the doctrine of the sacraments is intimately related to the doctrine of grace. Nevertheless, Baxter's understanding of the sacraments was — with Thomas Blake (1597?–1657) being one notable exception — not attacked by the (high) Calvinist opponents of his doctrine of justification.³

¹ For biographical accounts of Baxter, based on his autobiographical *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), see Frederick J. Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615–1691* (London: Cape, 1925?); idem, *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross (1662–1691)* (London: Cape, 1927); Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (London: Nelson, 1965).

² For Baxter's understanding of justification and for the controversies surrounding this doctrine, see Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Bockencentrum, 1993).

³ High Calvinism is usually understood to indicate a theological emphasis among some Calvinists that rendered predestination the central theological doctrine, strictly limited Christ's atonement to the elect only, developed clearly defined outlines of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*), and tended toward a doctrine of assurance of faith based on so-called practical and mystical syllogisms. Baxter's career is in many ways a reaction against the high Calvinism (or the even more radical hyper-Calvinism) of his day. For helpful overviews of the distinctions between Arminianism, Amyraldianism, high Calvinism, and hyper-Calvinism, see Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity 1689–1765* (London: Olive Tree, 1967); Alan P. F. Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation* (Worthing, England: Walter, 1982); Curt D. Daniel, "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983).

This study begins with a historical overview of Baxter's controversies on the sacraments followed by several chapters in which I undertake a theological examination of the debates. Perhaps the most fundamental question that must be addressed concerns the admission requirements of the sacraments. This issue is discussed in chapter 2. In opposition to Thomas Blake, Baxter insists that a profession of justifying faith is necessary for admission to baptism and the Lord's Supper. This position has significant implications for the latter's position on infant baptism, as well as its relation to the doctrine of justification. To understand Baxter's controversies on infant baptism it is necessary, therefore, first to analyze his views on the requirements to partake of the sacraments. In his discussion with Blake, the doctrine of the covenant proves the main source of disagreement. Baxter's universalism clearly influences his doctrine of the covenant. His admission policy further leads to several pastoral questions regarding the certainty of faith.

An analysis of Baxter's understanding of original sin should precede any discussion of his theory of the sacraments. Although his theory of original sin is not a cause for any extended controversy, his thoughts on this issue are nevertheless crucial to understanding his doctrine of baptism.⁴ For Baxter, baptism may also, in a sense, be said to forgive sin — which, in the case of infants, means only original sin. This highlights the importance of a discussion of Baxter's doctrine of original sin, which is presented in the third chapter. The discussion will also be helpful in gaining a clearer picture of his relationship to the French school of Saumur. Baxter's opposition to Joshua Placaeus (1606–1655) on original sin puts him outside the Amyraldian scheme of thought on a significant point of doctrine. On the other hand, his use of natural law in the defense of original sin is, in all likelihood, taken from the Amyraldian school of thought. An evaluation of Baxter's ideas on original sin also gives insight into the way in which he views the involvement of children in the actions of their parents. At this point, Baxter relies on his understanding of natural law. This basis for the involvement of children in their parents' actions not only comes to the fore in the doctrine of original sin but recurs in the doctrine of baptism. Insight into Baxter's thoughts on original sin is, therefore, basic to a proper understanding of his view on baptism. An important reason for dealing with Baxter's theory of original sin in this context is that his realist theory of imputation means that when God forgives origi-

⁴ Although a controversy with the high Calvinist Thomas Tully (1620–1676) was the immediate reason why Baxter published his *Two Disputations of Original Sin* (1675), the disputations themselves are not directed against Tully. My discussion of Baxter's doctrine of original sin is, therefore, not an analysis of a particular debate. To analyze Baxter's views on this topic, I have made use of his positive expositions, which, generally, did not originate in a polemical setting.

nal sin, he forgives actual sin. This explains Baxter's personal experience of being humbled.

Chapter 4 deals with the issue of infant baptism. The question must be faced of whether it is possible to retain infant baptism while insisting, at the same time, that baptism seals the mutual covenant between God and the believer. It is understandable, therefore, that Baxter's discussions with his neighbouring antipaedobaptist preacher, John Tombes (1603?–1676), give insight into Baxter's doctrine of the covenant. The debate with Tombes brings to the fore the important place that Baxter assigns to justifying faith as a prerequisite for baptism. His emphasis on this requirement makes several of his contemporaries believe that he has actually come to reject infant baptism and is just not ready to admit it. The debate with Tombes further highlights the importance of the conditional covenant of grace in Baxter's theology. The main motive for his defense of infant baptism lies in the hope that it affords for the salvation of the children of believers. Baxter is convinced that Tombes, by connecting baptism to election, cannot give any reasonable hope for the salvation of any children in particular.

On the opposite side of the spectrum lie the Calvinist sacramentalist positions of Cornelius Burges (1589–1665), Thomas Bedford (fl. 1650), and Samuel Ward (1571–1641), who are the topic of discussion in chapter 5. When Baxter opposes the prominence that they give to baptism as a means of grace, this gives insight into a central aspect of his view on the relation between baptism and the doctrines of grace. Baxter's unwillingness to consider baptism a proper condition of the covenant illustrates not just his fear of sacramentalism as such, but it also proves that for Baxter the place of baptism within the *ordo salutis* remains tenuous.

A number of people have, in one way or another, helped to ensure that this final product sees the light of day. I am particularly grateful to Dr. C. Graafland from the State University of Utrecht, under whose supervision I wrote a dissertation on the doctrine of justification in Richard Baxter's thought. It was Dr. Graafland who first stimulated my interest in Baxter's irenic theological approach. Baxter's appeal for unity on the basis of "mere Christianity" as well as his understanding of the theological intricacies surrounding issues of soteriology and the sacraments have left a deep impact on my thinking, and I am profoundly indebted to Dr. Graafland for introducing me to Baxter. I also wish to thank the staff of the Cambridge University Library and the library of the State University of Utrecht, who have been most helpful in ensuring access to a great deal of primary as well as secondary sources that were not readily available. I have also enjoyed the help of Dr. Williams's Library in London, England. I am grateful to the trustees of the library for allowing me

to consult Baxter's handwritten manuscripts; of course, the trustees are not responsible for the particular selection of manuscripts that I have chosen as sources. I also waive any copyright in the extracts that I have made, so far as the exercise of this right might debar other scholars from using and publishing the same material and from working for that purpose on the same manuscripts. A thank-you goes to Peter Johnson for lending me his technical expertise. Finally, I wish to thank the editorial committee of the *Studies in Reformed Theology and History* for their confidence in this project, and Dr. David Willis, in particular, for his careful reading of the manuscript and his helpful suggestions on how to improve it. Of course, I alone remain responsible for any errors or other infelicities that this monograph may contain.

In transcribing the primary sources, I have consistently retained original spellings, except that I have replaced the double "vv" with a "w"; I also have not reproduced the original long "s." Where parentheses occur, these are part of the original. Words between square brackets indicate my own additions to an original text. Any translations are mine, except where otherwise indicated. References to Baxter's *Practical Works* are given first to the 1990–1991 four-volume reprint (first edition, 1707) and then, between brackets, to Orme's twenty-three-volume edition of 1830 (e.g., *Works*, 3:791 [13:92–93]). *CCRB* references follow the identification number of Baxter's letters rather than volume and page numbers.

Hans Boersma
Trinity Western University
October 2001

I

Historical Background

THOMAS BLAKE AND ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

One of the most moderate critiques of Baxter's *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649) came from Thomas Blake, the Presbyterian pastor of Tamworth, Staffordshire. Blake mildly censured some of Baxter's central theses, such as his insistence that faith in Christ as Savior is only part of the condition for justification.¹ Blake admitted that faith in Christ as King and Teacher was part of justifying faith, but he insisted that it was only faith in Christ's blood that actually justified. Furthermore, Blake objected to Baxter's denial of the instrumentality of faith. For Blake, conditionality and instrumentality could well go hand in hand.² For the present purpose, a third area of disagreement is important: What kind of faith should be required for admission to the sacraments? Blake insisted in his *Vindicie foederis* (1653) that justifying faith was too strict a requirement. Baxter replied to this in the first part of his *Apology*, entitled *Rich. Baxters Account Given to his Reverend Brother Mr T. Blake of the*

¹ For Blake, see GBD, 5:396; Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans: Containing a Biographical Account of Those Divines Who Distinguished Themselves in the Cause of Religious Liberty, from the Reformation under Queen Elizabeth, to the Act of Uniformity, in 1662* (London: Black, 1813), 3:269–71; DNB, 5:179–80; CCRB, 251.

For Blake's position on the covenant and the sacraments, see E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570–1720* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 98–106, 124; James Burton McSwain, "The Controversy over Infant Baptism in England, 1640–1700" (PhD diss., Memphis State University, 1986), pp. 304–11.

I have given a more extensive analysis of the controversy between Baxter and Blake in *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 44–46. See also RB, I.110–14; William Orme, "The Life and Times of Richard Baxter," in *Works*, 1:452, 582–85; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Richard Baxter's *Apology* (1654): Its Occasion and Composition," *JEH* 4 (1953): 69–76.

² For these issues, see Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 182–83.

Reasons of his Dissent from The Doctrine of his Exceptions in his late Treatise of the Covenants (1654).³ Blake countered with a digression in *The Covenant Sealed* (1655), which he entitled "Faith which is short of Justifying, entitles to Baptisme."⁴ This caused some lengthy expositions on the same issue from Baxter in *Certain Disputations*, which he published in 1657. Blake's death in the same year put an end to the often acrimonious discussions.

BAXTER AND TOMBES ON INFANT BAPTISM

Baxter's Early Views on Baptism

Baxter entered upon his ministry with some significant theological questions unresolved in his mind. His views regarding the sacraments were by no means crystalized when he became the assistant to Rev. William Madstard in Bridgenorth, Shropshire, in the fall of 1640. Baxter's first pastorate was a difficult start. Partly this was due to the inhabitants of the town who "proved a very ignorant, dead-hearted People, (the Town consisting too much of Inns and Alehouses, and having no general Trade to imploy the Inhabitants in, which is the undoing of great Towns). . . ."⁵ Baxter's unsettled theological position was also a source of some difficulty:

I was a Novice in knowledge, and my conceptions were uncertain, shallow and crude: In some mistakes I was confident, and of some truths I was very doubtful and supicious [*sic*]. Among others, by that time I had baptized but two Children (at *Bridgnorth*) I begun to have some doubts of the lawfulness of Infant-Baptism. Whereupon I silently forbore the practise, and set my self, as I was able, to the study of the point.⁶

Baxter's doubts regarding infant baptism originated in part from his reading of Thomas Bedford's *A Treatise of the Sacraments* (1638), Cornelius Burges's *Baptismall Regeneration* (1629), and the Book of Common Prayer. Baxter took offense at the notion of regeneration of infants that he encountered in these writings, and he continued to shy away from the issue of paedobaptism, at least in public.⁷

Baxter's move to Kidderminster, Worcestershire, in April 1641 did not take away his scruples concerning infant baptism. As an army chaplain in

³ This part of the *Apology* was already written in the summer of 1653.

⁴ Blake, *Covenant Sealed*, pp. 113–87.

⁵ *RB*, I, 15.

⁶ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, 4th ed. (London, 1656), sigs. b1^r–v (emphasis in quotation inverted from original).

⁷ *Ibid.*, sigs. b1^v–b2^r.

Coventry, however, he had to come to grips with the issue. Some Baptists "had almost troubled all the Garrison, by infecting the honest Soldiers with their Opinions. . . ."⁸ They received assistance from the antipaedobaptist minister, Benjamin Cox (1595–c.1664).⁹ Cox's sectarian stand aggravated Baxter more than his views on baptism as such.¹⁰ The result was a debate in Coventry between Baxter and Cox on infant baptism and separation. Baxter also preached a number of sermons on these issues. Although he had come to "a full resolution" on the point of infant baptism, he still declined the request that he publish these sermons, "specially because I had so lately in the point of Baptism been resolved my self; and knew not but somewhat might come forth which might shake me again."¹¹

In the summer of 1645, Baxter left the quietude of Coventry to join Colonel Edward Whalley's New Model Army. Struggling with his health, Baxter went to see a physician, Sir Theodore Mayherne, in London, in 1646. While enjoying the hospitality of his friend, Colonel Sylvanus Taylor, Baxter met John Tombes, a Presbyterian antipaedobaptist.¹² It was the first occasion on which Baxter discussed the issue of infant baptism with this renowned defender of the antipaedobaptist view.¹³ The meeting confirmed Baxter in his position:

[H]aving greedily read over his [i.e., Tombes's] Exhortation and Examen a little before, I was glad of that opportunity for my further satisfaction, supposing that what more was to be said against Infant-baptism, I was as likely to hear from him as any. I urged him therefore with the very same Arguments which in the dispute at *Bewdely* I managed against him (from Infants Church-membership:) to which he gave me such feeble Answers, and I found him so confident when he had nothing to say which seemed to me of any moment, that I quickly gave

⁸ *RB*, I.45.

⁹ For Cox, see *DNB*, 12:403–4; *BDBRSC*, 1:184–85; *CCRB*, 5; W. T. Whitley, "Benjamin Cox," *TBHS* 6 (1918/19): 50–59; B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, A History of the English Baptists, 1 (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1983), pp. 73–74, 81–82.

¹⁰ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, sigs. b2^v–b3^r; see also pp. 10, 145, 147.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, sigs. b3^{r-v} (emphasis inverted).

¹² For Tombes's position on infant baptism, see McSwain, "Controversy over Infant Baptism," pp. 233–35, 276–77, 282–84, 293–95, 319–402.

¹³ The meeting took place in the summer of 1646, after the surrender of Worcester to the parliamentary army on 22 July (*RB*, I.58; cf. McSwain, "Controversy over Infant Baptism," p. 379). According to Keeble and Nuttall, the meeting took place in the winter of 1644/45, when Baxter also visited the same physician, Sir Theodore Mayherne (*CCRB*, 17; see also *RB*, I.45). Tombes, however, explicitly gives 1646 as the date of the conference (*Præcursor* [London, 1652], p. 16). This also fits the chronology given in Baxter's *Plain Scripture Proof*, in which the meeting at Colonel Taylor's house is said to have taken place after Baxter had joined Colonel Whalley's regiment in the summer of 1645 (*Plain Scripture Proof*, sigs. b3^v–b4^r).

over; being much confirmed, when I understood that the Champion of that Cause had no more to defend it.¹⁴

After the civil war, Baxter returned to Kidderminster in 1647. The neighbouring town of Bewdley received a new preacher in the person of John Tombes.¹⁵ Baxter himself supported the candidacy of Tombes when he was asked for his advice, for "I judged *Mr. T.* a pious able man; and though he were against Infant Baptism, yet being Orthodox in all things else (as I then thought he was) and the point but small, and I hoped he was a peaceable temperate man. . . ."¹⁶

Polemics between Baxter and Tombes

According to Baxter, Tombes was considered the most brilliant antipaedobaptist preacher in England.¹⁷ This native of Bewdley had been William Pemble's successor as lecturer of St. Martin's, Oxford (1624–1630), and had been vicar of Lecomister (1630–c.1643) and of All Saints, Bristol (c. 1643). In 1643 Tombes became a resident of London. He spent part of this period as master of the Temple (1645–1646). Tombes received this position on the condition that he would not discuss the issue of infant baptism. He did not keep his promise, however, and had to resign in November 1646.

Tombes's doubts regarding infant baptism had emerged as early as 1627 in Oxford. While in Bristol, he debated the issue with an unknown opponent. Unable to refute the paedobaptist's arguments from 1 Cor. 7:14, Tombes decided to study the matter in more detail.¹⁸ He soon had an opportunity to do so and came to an exposition of 1 Cor. 7:14 that supported the antipaedobaptist position.¹⁹ Around January 1644, Tombes urged his views on baptism in a six-day dispute in London with more than six ministers.²⁰ His attempts to convince the Westminster Assembly of the wrongfulness of infant baptism failed.²¹ Before becoming the pastor of Bewdley, Tombes had already established his renown as an advocate of the antipaedobaptist position by

¹⁴ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, sig. b4^r (emphasis inverted). The two treatises to which Tombes refers are his *Examen* (1645) and his *Exercitation* (1646).

¹⁵ W. T. Whitley reports that Tombes could avoid baptizing infants in Bewdley because it was a chapel within the parish of Ribbesford. Baptisms were only administered in parish churches ("Dissent in Worcestershire during the Seventeenth Century," *TBHS* 7 [1920]: 3).

¹⁶ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, sig. b4^v (emphasis throughout in original).

¹⁷ *RB*, I.88.

¹⁸ Tombes, *Apology*, p. 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 8.

²¹ McSwain, "Controversy over Infant Baptism," pp. 347–53.

writing three books on the issue: *An Examen of the Sermon Of Mr. Stephen Marshal* (1645), *An Exercitation About Infant-Baptisme* (1646), and *An Apology or Plea for the Two Treatises* (1646). When he became a close neighbour of Baxter's, the latter was well aware of Tombes's views.

Baxter's hope that he would be able to maintain a peaceful relationship with his new neighbour proved fruitless.²² Tombes did indeed attend Baxter's Thursday evening lectures, and Baxter comments that he "desired and enjoyed his [i.e., Tombes's] assistaace [*sic*], for which I return him unfeigned thanks."²³ Baxter attempted to avoid any controversy on the issue. Soon, however, people from Tombes's congregation came to question Baxter on his position regarding infant baptism. Tombes began to attack proponents of infant baptism — Stephen Marshall, Thomas Blake, and Baxter — in his sermons. Baxter, however, remained hesitant to deal with the issue. When told by one of Tombes's followers that Tombes was writing a lengthy treatise on infant baptism, in which he would deal with all his opponents at once, Baxter was even more firmly resolved not to put anything in writing. Tombes gave Baxter "some two or three Sheets against Mr. M[arshall]. on *1 Cor. 7.14*," whereupon Baxter copied the contents and handed the material back to Tombes.²⁴ The latter had hoped for some animadversions from Baxter and was irritated when he received them back without any comment.²⁵ Finally, Tombes asked Baxter in a letter for some syllogisms on the topic. To his chagrin, however, he found out that the only way in which Baxter might possibly be willing to enter into a debate with him was by means of an oral dispute.²⁶ Tombes did not relish such a format:

²² For discussions of Baxter's disputes over infant baptism, see Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, sigs. b1^r–c1^r; pp. 205–15, 403–15; idem, *More Proofs* (London, 1675), sigs. A3^r–A4^r; RB, I.58, 96, 108–9; Tombes, *Precursor*, pp. 1–3, 14–27, 75–77; CCRB, 17–18, 20–21, 23–24, 27, 29–31, 36–37, 231–33, 237, 241, 248; William Orme, "The Life and Writings of Richard Baxter, in *Works*, 1:680–89; Frederick T. [J.] Powicke, "Richard Baxter's Relation to the Baptists and His Proposed Terms of Communion," *TBHS* 6 (1919): 193–215; Powicke, *Life*, pp. 224–36; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Richard Baxter's Correspondence: A Preliminary Survey," *JEH* 1 (1950): 88–90; James I. Packer, "The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1954), pp. 318–26; Isolde Jeremias, "Richard Baxters Catholic Theology, ihre Voraussetzungen und Ausformungen" (PhD diss., Georg August-Universität, 1956), pp. 197–99; William M. Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution*, Croom Helm Social History Series (London: Croom Helm; Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979), pp. 155–57; McSwain, "Controversy over Infant Baptism," pp. 233–35, 276–77, 282–84, 293–95, 319–402; Timothy K. Beougher, "Conversion: The Teaching and Practice of the Puritan Pastor Richard Baxter with Regard to Becoming a 'True Christian'" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1990), pp. 174–79.

²³ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, sig. b4^r (emphasis throughout in original).

²⁴ Ibid. (emphasis inverted).

²⁵ Tombes, *Precursor*, p. 2.

²⁶ Baxter published the correspondence leading up to the dispute in the third edition of his *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 403–13. Cf. CCRB, 17–18, 20–21, 23–24, 27.

I yielded to a dispute though much against my mind, presaging from the knowledge I had of Mr. *Baxters* quicknesse and my own slownesse in answering an argument not under my eye, the favour of the most to Mr. *Bs.* tenet, and averseness from mine, and other accidents; Mr. *B.* likely to gain the fame of a victory, and to put back the work of reformation of that corruption. . . .²⁷

Tombes prepared his congregation for the debate by means of "eight or ten Sermons" on Matthew 28:19.²⁸ It was to no avail. When the debate was held on 1 January 1650, "the fame of a victory" went to Baxter.²⁹ Tombes was greatly upset by the treatment that he had received at Baxter's hand during the six- or seven-hour dispute at Bewdley. Throughout the ensuing literary combat, Tombes complained of having been wronged by Baxter.³⁰ Commented Tombes: "I have scarce met with less justice, or fair dealing from any man than from M: *B.*"³¹ Indeed, Tombes could not hide the fact that Baxter had gained a clear victory at the dispute.³²

²⁷ Tombes, *Precursor*, 3; cf. p. 16:

I do acknowledge, that it is my disposition, be it dulnesse or wearinesse, to pause on a new argument whether in reading or conference, so that I cannot oft-times give a clear answer to an argument I have not bin used to on a sudden, no nor many times to an argument I have been versed in, when it is not under my eye, when other matters possesse my memory, when fear of speaking ineptly doth benumme me and hinder my elocution, when I have some obscure notion of a fallacy which at present I cannot readily discover. Which knowledge of my self made me unwilling to come to a publick dispute or extemporal conference with Mr. *B.* whom I had found in conferences I had with him to be quick in apprehension and expression. . . .

See also Tombes, *Anti-pedobaptism*, II (London, 1654), 64.

²⁸ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, sig. c3^r. Cf. Tombes, *Precursor*, p. 32.

²⁹ Anthony à Wood is incorrect in suggesting: "All scholars there and then present, who knew the way of disputing and managing arguments, did conclude that Tombes got the better of Baxter by far" (ed. Philip Bliss, *Athene Oxonienses: Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the University of Oxford. To Which Are Added The Fasti or Annals of the Said University*, 3rd ed. [London: Rivington, 1813–20], 3:1063; cf. *BDBRSC*, 3:245). For a correct analysis, see Powicke, *Life*, p. 230.

³⁰ Tombes not only complained of being forced into a public debate (*Precursor*, p. 3), but also blamed Baxter for not giving him insight beforehand into the arguments to which he had to respond. He further complained that Baxter refused to repeat his arguments and to explain his terminology during the debate (*Apology*, pp. 12–13, 31; cf. Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 209–10; Tombes, *Precursor*, pp. 15–21, 75–76). Tombes was also upset with the fact that Baxter had several ministers sitting at his side during the dispute (*Precursor*, p. 23), that there had been neither rules for managing the dispute nor notaries on both sides (*ibid.*, p. 75), and that Baxter had published the answers that Tombes had given during the debate; these had been written down for Baxter by a stenographer (*ibid.*, p. 14).

³¹ Tombes, *Anti-pedobaptism*, II, 64.

³² Tombes, *Precursor*, pp. 3, 16, 23; *idem*, *Anti-Pedobaptism*, III (London, 1657), 290. Cf. Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, sigs. c4^{r-v}, pp. 272, 278–79; *RB*, I.88.

Immediately following the debate, Tombes continued to press Baxter to submit his arguments in writing.³³ A private conference between the two on 25 January failed to clear the atmosphere.³⁴ When Baxter published his *Saints Everlasting Rest* in 1650, he warned the inhabitants of Kidderminster in his dedication: "Beware of extreams in the controverted points of Religion."³⁵ In this context, he lashed out against separatism and Anabaptism: "You have seen God speak against them by Judgments from Heaven. What were the two Monsters in *New England* but miracles?"³⁶ The alleged miracles were the birth of monsters to the New England Antinomians, Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer.³⁷ That Baxter associated Tombes with this tale was the cause of considerable aggravation in the debate.³⁸ Also in his dedication to the *Saints Rest*, Baxter commented:

You heard in my late publike dispute at *Bewdley, January 1.* with Mr. *Tombs*, who is taken to be the ablest of them in the Land, and one of the most moderate, how little they can say even in the hardest point of Baptism; what gross absurdities they are driven to, and how little tender Consciencious fear of erring is left among the best.³⁹

Tombes was just in time to react to the dedicatory epistle in a speech appended to his farewell sermon on 17 March.⁴⁰ Baxter replied to the valedictory oration in the third part of his *Plain Scripture Proof*, entitled, "An Answer to Mr. Tombes His Valedictory Oration to the People of Bewdeley."⁴¹ As soon as Baxter had finished writing his reply, however, Tombes's *Antidote* came out (May 1650).⁴² In a somewhat different format, it contained the same arguments as the oration. Baxter was still in time to reply also to the *Antidote*: He

³³ Tombes's and Baxter's letters date from January 1650 (*Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 413–15; cf. CCRB 29–31).

³⁴ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, sig. d1r; Tombes, *Precursor*, p. 23.

³⁵ Baxter, *Saints Rest*, sig. A4v (emphasis throughout in original).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, sig. a1r (emphasis inverted).

³⁷ Cf. Powicke, *Life*, pp. 231–34.

³⁸ See Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, sig. d4r, pp. 149, 189–90, 196–97, 258, 389–90; Tombes, *Antidote* (London, 1650), pp. 20–24; *idem*, *Precursor*, pp. 30, 54. Baxter insisted that what had happened in New England was not just a strange accident, but a supernatural miracle. Tombes, however, was of the opinion that "Scripture is the sufficient and onely rule which now we have to judge doctrines by whether they be true or false 2 *Tim.* 3.16, 17" (*Precursor*, p. 52; cf. *Apology*, p. 23).

³⁹ Baxter, *Saints Rest*, sig. a1r (emphasis inverted).

⁴⁰ Tombes, *Precursor*, p. 23.

⁴¹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 163–233. For his reply to the valedictory oration, Baxter had used the copy of a stenographer (*Plain Scripture Proof*, sigs. d2v–d3r). Tombes published his *Antidote* just in time for Baxter to make mention of it in the latter's account of the dispute (*Plain Scripture Proof*, sig. d1v).

⁴² The dedicatory epistle is dated 22 May 1650 (Tombes, *Antidote*, sig. A3v).

added "A Corrective For a Circumforaneous Antidote" to his *Plain Scripture Proof*. The first part of the book contained two arguments for infant baptism. Baxter argued that infants must be baptized because they are disciples and because they are visible church members.⁴³ Baxter had earlier managed these same arguments in his sermons at Coventry.⁴⁴ With the argument from visible church membership Baxter included an exposition on 1 Cor. 7:14.⁴⁵ Here he could make use of the comments on this text that he had earlier received from Tombes. The second part of the book dealt with a number of objections against infant baptism.

Tombes now had the material he needed to include an appraisal of Baxter's position in the monumental rebuttal of the paedobaptist position that he had been planning to publish. Before presenting this work, however, Tombes first published his *Praecursor* (1652), in which he attacked Baxter's *Plain Scripture Proof*.⁴⁶ Baxter reacted to it in his "Præfestinationis Morator," which he appended to the third edition of *Plain Scripture Proof* (1653).⁴⁷ A year earlier, Tombes had started with the first volume of his lengthy review, entitled *Antipaedobaptism*. This was followed in 1654 by a second volume. Both volumes contained extensive sections against Baxter's position on infant baptism.

A year later, in April 1655, Tombes reopened the correspondence with Baxter and requested specific texts from Scripture that prove that there is a law or ordinance of the visible church membership of infants. At first Baxter declined to comply with Tombes's request, but when the latter continued to press him he finally came up with an extensive response. At this point Tombes ended the correspondence.⁴⁸ In the third volume of his *Anti-Paedobaptisme* (1657), however, he published the correspondence of 1655 — along with

⁴³ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 15–24, 24–108.

⁴⁴ Baxter comments that the two arguments presented in *Plain Scripture Proof* are but two of the twelve that he used in the lectures in Coventry (ibid, sig. b3^v).

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 80–102.

⁴⁶ Baxter's *Plain Scripture Proof* was also the subject of criticism in Henry Haggar, *The Foundation of the Font Discovered* (1653); William Kaye, *Baptism Without Bason* (1653); Samuel Fisher, *Baptism Before, or After Faith & Repentance* (1669); and Philip Cary, *A Solemn Call* (1690). Baxter never reacted to these writings: "There came but lately to my hands two of one sort, and the report of a third that are written against me, Mr Fisher, Mr Haggar, and Mr Keye; but when I found them fraught with non-sense and reviling, I laid them by, and never mean to meddle with them more" (*Admonition*, sig. A2^v).

Furthermore, John Barret distilled Baxter's *More Proofs* in a treatise entitled *Fifty Queries* (1675). This was criticized by Thomas Grantham in *Queries Examined* (1676). In *Much in a Little* (1678), Barret presented an abstract of Baxter's *Plain Scripture Proof*, as well as a rejoinder to Grantham.

⁴⁷ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 369–401.

⁴⁸ For these letters between Baxter and Tombes, see CCRB, 231–33, 237, 241, 248.

further attacks on *Plain Scripture Proof*—and gave a lengthy rebuttal to Baxter's last letter.⁴⁹ Baxter declined to respond to Tombes's publication of the correspondence: "For to me his Reply seemed so empty and next nothing, that I thought it unnecessary to say any more."⁵⁰ When Tombes published his *Felo de Se* in 1659, Baxter again did not reply. In *Felo de Se*, Tombes asserted that Baxter's position was contradictory. Tombes quoted twenty of Baxter's arguments from the latter's second disputation against Thomas Blake.⁵¹ Since Baxter insisted that justifying faith was a requirement for baptism, he should logically adopt an antipaedobaptist position, according to Tombes.

HENRY DANVERS AND EDWARD HUTCHINSON ON INFANT BAPTISM

Baxter felt that he had to react when Henry Danvers (c. 1622–1687), a Fifth Monarchist and antipaedobaptist colonel in the parliamentary army, published his *Treatise of Baptism* (1673).⁵² Danvers adopted Tombes's argument that Baxter should abandon his paedobaptist position in order to be consistent.⁵³ Also, Danvers commented on Baxter's views regarding various issues, as taken from the latter's *Christian Directory* (1673). In the preface to his *Full and Easie Satisfaction* (1674), Baxter briefly mentioned that Danvers's comments on the *Christian Directory* misrepresented his position. Danvers rebutted the preface in an appendix to subsequent editions of his *Treatise of Baptism*.⁵⁴ Baxter decided to reply to the accusations, also because "it is become of late a common saying among the Anabaptists, that I am turned to their opinion or very near it, but have not humility to retract my former error, and openly acknowledge what I hold."⁵⁵ Consequently, he published his *More Proofs of Infants Church-membership* (1675). It was a republication of his correspondence with Tombes, dating from 1655, along with a final reply to

⁴⁹ Tombes, *Anti-Paedobaptism*, III, 353–448.

⁵⁰ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 211; cf. sig. A3v.

⁵¹ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, pp. 41–243.

⁵² For Danvers, see DNB, 14:39–40; B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 211, 248; Richard L. Greaves, "The Tangled Careers of Two Stuart Radicals: Henry and Robert Danvers," *BQ* 29 (1981): 32–43; *BDBRSC*, 2:210–12; Richard L. Greaves, *Saints and Rebels: Seven Nonconformists in Stuart England* (n.p.: Mercer University Press, 1985), pp. 157–77.

⁵³ Henry Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 2nd ed. (London, 1675), pp. 2–3, 8–20, 23–25, 34–35, 84–85, 216–17.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 361–87.

⁵⁵ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 214.

Tombes's position.⁵⁶ In the second part of the treatise, Baxter replied to Danvers's accusations.⁵⁷ Much of the debate with Danvers focused on the history of the issue of paedobaptism. The third part of the book dealt mainly with historical questions as well. Here Baxter responded to Danvers's *Rejoinder to Mr. Will's Vindiciae* (1675), which, in turn, was a response to a book by Obediah Wills against Danvers. Baxter had earlier prefaced a treatise of Wills against Danvers.⁵⁸

Danvers replied to Baxter's *More Proofs* in *A Second Reply In Defence of the Treatise of Baptism* (1675). Here Danvers further buttressed his argument that consistency demanded that Baxter adopt an antipaedobaptist position.⁵⁹ The remainder of the treatise further elaborated on historical evidence regarding infant baptism and on Baxter's views on issues other than infant baptism. Tombes wrote a postscript to Danvers's book, in which Tombes, too, reflected on Baxter's *More Proofs*.⁶⁰ Here he again insisted that Baxter had managed and published the dispute at Bewdley "insolently, injuriously, unbrotherly and unchristianly."⁶¹ Baxter wrote only a few pages in response, in a postscript to *The Substance of Mr. Cartwright's Exceptions Considered* (1675).⁶² Baxter complained, "And if I write against both Extreames, I am taken by such Men as this, but to be *for both and against both*, and to *contradict my self*."⁶³ Danvers continued the combat with a *Third Reply* (1676).

Another antipaedobaptist minister, Edward Hutchinson, also entered the fray in a postscript to *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism* (1675). Hutchinson expressed his disdain for the manner in which Baxter had attacked Danvers and Tombes. In a private letter to Baxter, Hutchinson challenged him to review what he had written on infant baptism.⁶⁴ Baxter did so in his *Review of the State of Christian's Infants* (1676).⁶⁵ Not only was his *Review* a reply to Hutchinson's letter, but it also evaluated Danvers's *Third Reply*.⁶⁶ Thomas Delaune, Hutchinson's son-in-law, upset at the unfair treat-

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 5–161.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 183–339.

⁵⁸ Wills's book, a reply to Danvers's *Treatise of Baptism*, was entitled *Infant-Baptism Asserted & Vindicated by Scripture And Antiquity* (1674). Danvers responded to it with *Imocency and Truth Vindicated* (1675). Wills, in turn, defended his position in *Vindiciae Vindiciarum* (1675). This led to Danvers's *Rejoinder to Mr. Wills's Vindiciae* (1675). Wills had the final word with *Censura Censurae* (1676).

⁵⁹ Danvers, *Second Reply* (London, 1675), pp. 1–32.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 267–71.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 267.

⁶² Baxter, *Substance* (London, 1675), pp. 73–79.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 78.

⁶⁴ *RB*, III.187; *CCRB*, 987.

⁶⁵ Cf. *CCRB*, 988.

⁶⁶ Baxter, *Review* (London, 1676), pp. 47–64.

ment he thought Baxter had given Hutchinson, published his father-in-law's letter to Baxter so that readers would have more than just Baxter's *Review* to go by.⁶⁷

This historical overview may give some insight into the sharp character of the debates. Lamont has commented that Baxter's controversies concerning baptism in the early 1650s "have a breathtaking crudity about them."⁶⁸ This judgment may, without much qualification, be extended to the debates of the 1670s as well. Concerns for personal vindication meant that theological substance suffered at times in these discussions. The only discussion that really forms an exception is the protracted debate between Baxter and Tombes. It, too, is acrimonious in nature, but it does deal with significant theological issues. The debate makes clear that the question of infant baptism is closely connected to the doctrine of the covenant.

BURGES, BEDFORD, AND WARD ON MEANS OF GRACE

The discussions between Baxter and Calvinist sacramentalists concerning baptism touched on one of the most significant links between baptism and soteriological concerns.⁶⁹ Does baptism convey grace? If so, is this grace real (regeneration), or is it relative (justification)? The immediate cause of Baxter's involvement with the question of baptismal regeneration was a book that came to him "as under *Davenants* name."⁷⁰ It turned out to be a book written by Thomas Bedford, entitled *Vindicie Gratie sacramentalis* (1650).⁷¹ In this treatise, Bedford, a student of John Davenant, advocated that baptismal regeneration extended to all baptized infants. In presenting his argument, the rector of St. Martin Outwich in London appealed to Samuel Ward, who had been a delegate to the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), and who was Davenant's

⁶⁷ Thomas Delaune, *Mr. Richard Baxter's Review* (London, 1677), pp. 2–10. Delaune also wrote a letter to Baxter, stating that Baxter had no right to publish Hutchinson's letter (CCRB, 997). For Delaune (d. 1685), see *DNB*, 14:315.

⁶⁸ Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, p. 155.

⁶⁹ The term "sacramentalism" tends to be elusive. In the sixteenth century, Lutherans accused Zwinglians and Calvinists of being "sacramentarians" for their low view of the Lord's Supper (Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 9). In the context of seventeenth-century debates over the role of baptism, "sacramentalism" denotes the view that the sacraments are, in some sense, efficacious means of grace. When referring to some seventeenth-century Calvinists as "sacramentalists," I have in mind the latter meaning of the term (see *ibid.*, pp. 76–87). My thanks go to Dr. David Willis for pointing out the rather opposite meanings of this terminology.

⁷⁰ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 289.

⁷¹ For Thomas Bedford, see *DNB*, 4:112; CCRB, 1:57. Bedford's theory of baptismal regeneration is discussed in Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, pp. 101–4.

successor as the Lady Margaret professor of divinity at the University of Cambridge.⁷²

Bedford appealed to Ward by including the latter's "Dissertatio de efficacia baptismi," almost ten years after his death, in his own *Vindiciae Gratiae sacramentalis*. Ward's "Dissertatio" was, in fact, part of an interchange he had had with Thomas Gataker (1574–1654).⁷³ Gataker had planned to refrain from publishing his twenty-year-old epistolary discussions with his old university friend, Ward.⁷⁴ When Gataker heard, however, that some of Ward's writings on baptism had been published, he wanted to verify the rumor. He then discovered that Baxter's *Plain Scripture Proof* (1651) contained a reply to Thomas Bedford. Gataker immediately set out to secure Bedford's own treatise. He then noticed that the entire discussion between himself and Ward had been published by Bedford. The only thing that Bedford had not published was Gataker's final reply.⁷⁵ This discovery made Gataker decide to publish his

⁷² For Ward, see DNB, 59:335–36; Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, ed. P. Austin Nuttall (London: Tegg, 1840), 1:487–88; Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, pp. 78–83; Richard Rogers and Samuel Ward, *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, Studies in Church History, 2, ed. M. M. Knappen (Chicago: American Society of Church History; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1933), pp. 37–49; G. P. Van Isterzon, "Engelse belangstelling voor de Canones van Dordrecht," *NeAKG*, NS 48 (1968): 272–73; G. J. Hoenderdaal, "The Debate about Arminius outside the Netherlands," in *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century: An Exchange of Learning*, ed. Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer and G. H. M. Psthumus Meyjes (Leiden: Universitaire Pers/Brill, 1975), pp. 153–54; Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590–1640*, Oxford Historical Monographs (1987; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 44–52, 92–101.

Knappen is incorrect in stating that Ward "held on grimly to the doctrinal Calvinism in which William Perkins had trained him" (in Richard Rogers and Samuel Ward, *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, p. 44). Tyacke demonstrates convincingly that Ward held to hypothetical universalism (*Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 92–97). Also G. P. Van Isterzon's analysis of Ward's correspondence as a delegate to the Synod of Dort illustrates his moderate position ("Samuel Ward en de synode van Dordrecht," in *Wegen en gestalten in het Gereformeerd protestantisme: Een bundel studies over de geschiedenis van het Gereformeerd Protestantisme aangeboden aan Prof. Dr S. van der Linde bij zijn afscheid als gewoon hoogleraar aan de Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht*, ed. W. Balke, C. Graafland, and H. Harkema [Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976], pp. 141–53). This indirectly confirms Baxter's comment about Ward as advocate of the "middle way."

⁷³ For Gataker, see Brook, *Lives*, 3:200–222; James Reid, *Memoirs of the Lives and Writings of Those Eminent Divines, Who Convened in the Famous Assembly at Westminster, in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 1 (1811; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), pp. 284–315; GBD, 15:334–40; DNB, 21:60–62; C. F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (London: SPCK, 1966), pp. 172–74.

⁷⁴ Thomas Gataker, *De Baptismatis Infantilis vi* (London, 1653), sig. A3r: "Therefore, I judged it more satisfactory and prudent to keep it shut up among private files than to let it go into the public." [Proinde in scriniis privatis conclusum destinare, quam in publicum emittere, satius & consultius ducebam.]

⁷⁵ Ibid., sig. A3r:

I immediately discussed that Rev. Baxter with my friend [i.e., Francis Taylor], that with his effort I might obtain the treatise from both sides. (Although he was personally unknown to me, from his writings which I had already seen, I had at least a token of his learning and

De Baptismatis Infantilis vi (1653). Like Bedford's treatise, it contained the entire debate; this time, however, it included Gataker's final reply.

Bedford's *Vindicie Gratie sacramentalis* was not the first occasion on which he defended baptismal regeneration. In 1638 he had already published *A Treatise of the Sacraments* and *The Ready Way to True Freedom*. In both treatises he had presented his views on baptism. His appeal to Ward was the new element in his publication of 1650.

Bedford was the main object of Baxter's criticism in his *Plain Scripture Proof* (1651). He felt compelled to correct Ward as well, however, because Ward regarded baptism as a condition for justification. Baxter published his reaction to Bedford and Ward by way of an appendix to his treatise against John Tombes, *Plain Scripture Proof*.⁷⁶ In return, Bedford sent Baxter a conciliatory letter.⁷⁷ In a second letter, Bedford observed that the difference with Baxter was only small and therefore asked him "to leav out that part of the Book w[hi]^{ch} relateth to mee: And if you pleas, in lieu of it, to sett down y^e reason why you w[i]thdraw it; my letter & yo[u]^rs, & what hath past betwixt us touching this questi. . . ."⁷⁸ Baxter did concur with Bedford's evaluation of the matter: "I see we are neerer much then at first I judged by your books."⁷⁹ But Baxter did not leave out his animadversions on Bedford from his third edition of *Plain Scripture Proof* (1653). His only concession was the insertion of most of his correspondence with Bedford into the treatise.⁸⁰

piety.) Because also he had not done very much since that time. Thus, having the mastery of the book written by Bedford, I immediately discovered that those *Exceptiones* or *Animadversiones* to the *Thesis* of Rev. Ward which I had given to him — under the title of *Censure*, which, indeed, the illustrious man (i.e., Ward) himself had attached to it — were published, while I was utterly ignorant about it. [Ego protinus, cum *D. Baxterum* illum, licet de facie ignotum, ex eis tamen ipsius, quæ jam videram scriptis, & eruditionis & pietatis nomine insignem admodum haberem, cum amico [i.e., Fr. Taylero] agebam, ut ipsius operâ Scriptum utrunque obtinerem: quod & ab illo havi ita multò post est præstitum. Ita libri Bedfordiani compos factus, deprehendi statim *Exceptiones*, an *Animadversiones* illas in *D. Wardi Thesi* ad ipsum à me datas, sub *Censure* titulo, quæ Vir Præclariss. ipse reverâ præfixerat, me inscio prorsus, evulgatas.]

⁷⁶ The "Appendix" is dated 12 November 1650 (Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 346).

⁷⁷ Baxter published Bedford's letter in *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 347–54. The letter dates from 8 March 1650/51. Cf. *CCRB*, 57.

⁷⁸ DWL MS BC vi, f. 117r. Cf. *CCRB*, 85.

⁷⁹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 365. The agreement between Baxter and Bedford was, in reality, more apparent than real. For a correct analysis of this point, see Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, pp. 103–4. See also below, p. 76.

⁸⁰ Baxter omitted from this published correspondence Bedford's letter, in which the latter requested Baxter to omit from the third edition of *Plain Scripture Proof* his animadversions on Bedford's book. Bedford's letter is in reply to an earlier letter from Baxter. Baxter also did not publish this letter in his *Plain Scripture Proof*. Unlike Bedford's reply, it is no longer extant among Baxter's correspondence in Doctor Williams's Library. Cf. *CCRB*, 85.

One reason for Baxter's determination to expose the errors of the Calvinist sacramentalists was his fear that sacramentalist extremes might lead to an overreaction and might tempt people into the "contrary extream" of Anabaptism. Baxter appealed to his own experience. His "reading (and discovering the error)" of the books of Cornelius Burges and Thomas Bedford had contributed to his own early doubts regarding paedobaptism.⁸¹ Furthermore, Baxter was displeased with Bedford's appeal to his teacher, John Davenant. Baxter highly valued Davenant's views on universal atonement as well as those on the role of good works in justification, "God having opened to him (I think) the true middleway in many weighty points of Religion."⁸²

At the center of the whole debate around the efficacy of baptism lay the issue of the relation between baptism and grace. The debate focused on the question of whether the outward act of baptism itself regenerated and justified the recipient of baptism. Tied up with this question were issues such as the moment of reception of initial (regenerating) grace; the relation between common and special grace; the perseverance of the saints; the necessity of baptism; and the question of what baptism conveyed, what it sealed, how it related to the covenant, and what kind of instrumentality it could be said to have with regard to justification.

⁸¹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 293. The book of Cornelius Burges to which Baxter refers is *Baptismall Regeneration of Elect Infants* (1629). For Cornelius Burges, who was one of the two assessors of the Westminster Assembly, see *DNB*, 7:301-4; *GBD*, 7:315-16; Wood, *Athene Oxonienses*, 3:681-88; *CR*, 87-88; Reid, *Memoirs*, 1:68-98; Anne Laurence, *Parliamentary: Army Chaplains 1642-1651* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1990), pp. 106-7.

⁸² Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 332.

II

Admission to the Sacraments

JUSTIFYING FAITH AS ADMISSION REQUIREMENT

Assent and Consent

The present chapter focuses on the relationship between faith and the sacraments. It will become clear that Baxter's view on the covenant has a significant bearing on his understanding of the sacraments. The conditionality of the covenant of grace is a constant element in his expositions on the sacraments. The mutuality of the covenant sealed in baptism is highlighted by his insistence that justifying faith is a requirement for admission to the sacraments.

The nature of justifying faith is a bone of contention between Baxter and Thomas Blake. Baxter is of the opinion that justifying faith takes the whole Christ, Savior and Lord, for its object. Blake cannot agree — faith only justifies by trusting in Christ's sacrificial death. Blake obviously takes a narrower position on this score than does Baxter. As such, Blake is representative of a somewhat more high-Calvinist view, whereas Baxter takes a more mediating position.¹ It is somewhat remarkable that an opposite trend occurs in an important related issue with more immediate practical implications: the admission to the church and its sacraments.² Now it is Blake who pleads for moder-

¹ Cf. Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 166–69.

² For discussions on Baxter's views on the sacraments, see James S. Pollock, ed., *Richard Baxter on the Sacraments: Holy Orders, Holy Baptism, Confirmation, Absolution, Holy Communion* (Oxford: Parker, 1880). This booklet collects Baxter's comments on church offices, baptism, profession of faith, absolution, and the Lord's Supper; Irvonwy Morgan, *The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter* (London: Epworth, 1946), pp. 163–78; Packer, "Redemption and Restoration," pp. 309–30; Jeremias, "Richard Baxters Catholic Theology," pp. 197–203; William Ross Shealy, "The Power of the Present: The Pastoral Perspective of Richard Baxter, Puritan Divine: 1615–1691" (PhD diss., Drew University, Madison, N.J., 1966), pp. 286–319, esp. pp. 308–9, dealing with discipline; Stephen Mayor, *The Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent* (London: Epworth,

ation and is apprehensive of antipaedobaptist tendencies in Baxter's doctrine.³ Baxter is allegedly too strict in his membership qualifications.⁴ The latter's dislike of being considered a high Calvinist or antipaedobaptist, however, is evident. He even admits: "[T]he partiality that I have felt in the study of this point hath been for Mr *Blake's* opinion against my own; and I had rather a great while (till the light convinced mee) have found his opinion true, than my own."⁵ This admission indicates that it is not so much high-Calvinist sympathies that make Baxter oppose Blake on this score. Rather, as will be clarified in what follows, Baxter's strict admission policy is firmly anchored in his doctrine of the covenant.

Baxter never relaxes his insistence on the prerequisite of justifying faith for baptism, a view he acquired in his earlier years. The importance that he attaches to the element of faith in the sacraments makes him reject Blake's view that dogmatical faith is sufficient for admission to the sacraments.⁶ Four of

1972), pp. 122–47; Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, pp. 75–138 (especially the chapter on baptism); C. Graafland, "Het Puritanisme," in *Rondom de doopvont: Leer en gebruik van de heilige doop in het Nieuwe Testament en in de geschiedenis van de westerse kerk*, ed. W. Van 't Spijker et al. (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1983), pp. 342–45; Beougher, "Conversion," pp. 169–82.

For a well-documented account of the connection between Arminianism and a high view of the sacraments, see Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*.

³ Holifield, who gives an excellent discussion of the differences between Baxter and Blake, comments that Blake "believed that Baxter himself often sounded and acted like a crypto-Anabaptist, and he could not appreciate Baxter's scruples about admission, which he attributed to faulty doctrine" (*Covenant Sealed*, p. 98). Cf. McSwain's comment: "The thrust of Blake's treatise [i.e., *Vindicie foederis*] was that the broad external scope of the covenant of grace in the Old Testament, encompassing Abraham's descendants, remained in force in the New Testament era" ("Controversy over Infant Baptism," p. 310).

⁴ It is worth noting that both Baxter and Blake regard admission to the church and admission to the sacraments as coextensive. Although the issue concerns both sacraments, the actual debate centers mainly on baptism; the questions of church membership and admission to the Lord's Supper do receive some separate attention, but for the most part the discussion revolves around baptism. The reason for this is the threat posed by (often independent) antipaedobaptists to the (Presbyterian) paedobaptist view since the 1640s. McSwain states that from 1640 to 1700 at least 323 men debated the issue of infant baptism. The reason for this renewed vigor of debate lay in the fact that church reform appeared a realistic possibility (McSwain, "Controversy over Infant Baptism," pp. 1–6). Cf. Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 87.

Baxter's strict policies only concern the question of the requirement of a profession of justifying faith. He does not restrict admission to the sacraments to any single "party" or denomination. He comments in typical Baxterian fashion: "As for them that call none Godly but their own parties, or sect-fellows, I will pass them, as not worthy our further mention" (*Certain Disputations*, p. 250).

⁵ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, p. 505. Cf. *RB*, I.113–14: "And fain I would have found some other Qualification to take up with, (1. Either the Profession of some lower Faith than that which hath the Promise of Salvation; 2. Or at least such a Profession of *Saving Faith*, as needeth not to be *credible* at all, &c.) But the Evidence of Truth hath forced me from all other ways, and suffered me to rest no where but here."

⁶ Blake, *Vindicie foederis*, pp. 241–45.

the five disputations in Baxter's *Certain Disputations Of Right to Sacraments* (1657) address, more or less, this very question.⁷ Baxter considers Blake's opinion wrought with inconsistencies and he repeatedly challenges Blake to state clearly what he means by faith that is short of justifying.⁸ After all, strictly dogmatical faith—even if this were a possibility—cannot possibly qualify for baptism, for then “the Devils are Christians,” argues Baxter with an allusion to James 2:19.⁹ Does Blake appeal to the fact that dogmatical faith is true faith *suo genere*?¹⁰ Baxter immediately counters: “Faith in *Jupiter, Sol, Mahomet*, is true in *suo genere*: and so is humane Faith: yet I would call it a false Faith, if this should be pretended to be Faith in Christ.”¹¹

In his debate with Blake, Baxter comes close to denying the possibility of dogmatical faith. He is of the opinion that the understanding and the will are closely connected. Assent and consent cannot be separated.¹² This is also the reason, in Baxter's view, why Blake is unable to define, in a satisfactory manner, the nature of the “lesser faith” that is required for church membership. Says Baxter,

If wee once admit men to Baptism or the Lord's Supper upon the profession of any other than Justifying faith, wee shall bee utterly confounded, and not bee able to give any satisfactory description of that faith, and so never bee able to practice our Doctrine, as beeing utterly uncertain whom to baptize.¹³

Here Baxter lays bare one of the deepest motives of his opposition to mere assent as the determining factor for church membership: He refuses to locate justifying faith in either only the intellect or only the will; both faculties are involved. Says Baxter: “As the Act of Faith must needs bee both of the Intellect and the Will, so the Object must bee answerably, the Truth of the Gos-

⁷ The first disputation is directed against what Baxter considers the other extreme, that of the independent high Calvinists: “Whether Ministers may admit persons into the Church of Christ by Baptism, upon the bare verbal Profession of the true Christian saving faith, without staying for, or requiring any further Evidences of sincerity? *Aff*” (*Certain Disputations*, p. 1; emphasis inverted).

An interesting aside is that Baxter appeals to the Westminster Standards (WCF, XXVIII; Larger Catechism, Q. 166; Shorter Catechism, Q. 95; and Directory) in defense of his position that a profession of justifying faith is required for admission to the ordinances (*Certain Disputations*, pp. 204–5; cf. Baxter's appeal to the Westminster Assembly on this point in his *Account* [London, 1654], pp. 94–95).

⁸ Baxter, *Account* (1654), pp. 105–6; *Certain Disputations*, pp. 8, 163–75, 505–8.

⁹ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, p. 273.

¹⁰ Blake, *Vindicie foederis*, p. 244.

¹¹ Baxter, *Account* (1654), p. 93.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹³ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, p. 163.

pell, and the goodness of the benefits there revealed and offered.”¹⁴ This is his major objection to the Roman Catholic admission policy: It is based on the doctrine of *fides informis*, which means only assent joined with consent to live in a church state.¹⁵ It is also one of the points on which he explicitly makes mention of his disagreement with George Downham (d. 1634) and John Cameron (c. 1580–1625), who he thinks place faith only in the intellect.¹⁶

If such faith is involved in justification — a faith consisting not merely of assent but also of consent, located not only in the intellect but also in the will — it becomes impossible that a faith that is short of justifying may give admission to the ordinances; repentance is needed, a profession of saving faith in the triune

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14. Cf. pp. 146, 205, 250, 272–73; Baxter, *Account* (1654), p. 62.

¹⁵ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, pp. 46–52, 74–76.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 397. Brian G. Armstrong has launched a reinterpretation of Amyraut's doctrine of faith (*Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism in Seventeenth-Century France* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969], pp. 241–262). In Armstrong's view, the criticism of Max Geiger and H. E. Weber on Amyraut's doctrine of faith is only partly correct. According to Geiger and Weber, Amyraut saw faith as “simply to be persuaded of the truth of anything.” In defending Amyraut against this charge, Armstrong maintains that for Amyraut, *notitia* was intellectual knowledge. The external motifs of the gospel (truth, usefulness, and beauty or delightfulness) were imprinted on the understanding by the internal efficacious light of the Spirit. *Persuasio*, unlike *notitia*, had its place in the will. This *persuasio* took the place of the traditional *assensus* and *fiducia* combined. *Notitia* combined with *persuasio* constituted faith. Armstrong states accordingly that “while Amyraut unquestionably put the emphasis on the noetic aspect of faith, knowledge in itself in no way exhausts his meaning of faith” (ibid., p. 250).

The very quotations that are adduced by way of evidence, however, are not convincing. On the contrary, some of them seem to contradict Armstrong's thesis, such as Amyraut's statement that “that which gives the *proper nature and essence to faith is the impression* of the admirable beauty which appears in the gospel of Christ and of the motifs by which it draws us to love God and be charitable towards men” (quoted in ibid., p. 255; emphasis added). The beauty of the gospel is not directly impressed on the will, but is impressed on the intellect. Although this has profound implications for the will — which always follows the intellect — this does not mean that the essence of faith as such lies in the will. Amyraut explicitly condemns this view:

It ought to be beyond controversy — among all those at least who do not consider this matter in an entirely negligent manner — that the subject in which the habit of faith originates and remains is that faculty which in man is called the intellect. . . . For truth is the object of the intellect; and persuasion is nothing but to admit or to introduce into the intellect those reasons and those arguments by means of which each matter demonstrates itself to be true. [Subjectum cui habitus fidei innascitur adque inhæret, facultatem eam esse quæ in homine intellectus appellatur, debet esse extra controuersiam apud omnes, qui saltem rem istam considerant non omnino oscitanter. . . . Nam veritas est objectum intellectus: & persuasio non fit aliter quam admittendo aut introducendo in intellectum eas rationes, eaque argumenta, quibus vnaquæque res sese veram esse demonstrat.] (Lewis Cappel, *Moyse Amyraut*, and Joshua Placaus, *Syntagma thesivm theologiarum* [Saumur, France, 1665], II, 86)

The traditional interpretation of Amyraut, which is also Baxter's interpretation, appears to be correct: Amyraut did have an “intellectualist” view of faith. This disagreement between Baxter and Amyraut (and his predecessor, Cameron) is also noted by Packer and Lamont (Packer, “Redemption and Restoration,” pp. 221–22; Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, p. 140).

God. Indeed, as Paul says, only those are baptized who are "Saints, or sanctified, men dead with Christ and risen with him, such as have put on Christ, sons of God by Adoption, Abrahams seed, Heirs according to promise, and justified."¹⁷

Profession of Justifying Faith

Blake, aware of the predicament in which he finds himself if he insists without wavering on admission on the basis of dogmatical faith, seems to make certain concessions: There must be some repentance, a renunciation of false ways, and an engagement to Christian faith.¹⁸ There must be an acknowledgment that the sacraments are necessary for the believer to come closer to God.¹⁹ There must be a profession of the necessity of justifying faith to salvation, as well as an engagement to it.²⁰ At one point Blake even admits that a profession of justifying faith is required for baptism.²¹ It may seem as if there is virtual agreement between Blake and Baxter. Indeed, Baxter ironically comments, "Perhaps wee have disputed all this while without an adversary. . . ." ²² Both authors are aware, however, that this is not the case. The point is that for Blake, the profession of justifying faith is only the condition to which baptism *engages*; justifying faith itself is not the *prerequisite* for baptism.²³ For Blake, the sacraments legitimately function as converting ordinances.²⁴ Baxter argues strenuously

¹⁷ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, p. 100 (emphasis throughout in original). Baxter gives an extensive elaboration on this (pp. 100–18).

¹⁸ Blake, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 109.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

²² Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, p. 173.

²³ Blake, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 144. Irvonwy Morgan misrepresents Baxter in an attempt to minimize the difference between the views of John Wesley (1703–1791) and Baxter. Morgan states that for Wesley "[t]he only thing required at the time of communicating was not fitness, but a desire to receive whatever Christ pleased to give, and a sense of one's utter sinfulness and helplessness." He then concludes that there is not much difference between Baxter and Wesley (Morgan, *Nonconformity*, p. 173). Baxter's point against Blake, however, was precisely that there had to be fitness, through justifying faith, to receive the sacraments. Morgan suggests that for Baxter "some faith" was a sufficient requirement. Baxter does use this expression once (*Confirmation and Restauration* [1658], in *Works*, 4:309 [14:461]). The context makes clear, however, that "some faith and repentance" includes at least "the beginning of special saving grace" (*Works*, 4:309 [14:460]).

²⁴ According to Holifield, the term "converting ordinance" was first introduced by William Prynne (1600–1669) in 1645 (Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 113). Prynne indeed argues at length against the assertion "That this sacrament [i.e., the Lord's Supper] is no converting, but only a sealing Ordinance . . ." (William Prynne, *Vindication* [London, 1645], p. 40; emphasis throughout in original; cf. pp. 40–44). For Prynne, see *DNB*, 46:432–37; William M. Lamont, *Marginal Prynne 1600–1669*, *Studies in Political History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963).

against such a view. He is only willing to admit that, according to God's decree, the sacraments *may* function as such. But this is not their appointed end.²⁵

If, for Baxter, only justifying faith itself gives a title to baptism, this raises the questions of if and how this faith can be verified. To avoid this problem Baxter states that the *profession* of justifying faith is sufficient.²⁶ Dissimulation may not be blamed on the minister: He only has the profession of his parishioners to go by. It is the false professor himself who is at fault.²⁷ In judging the sincerity of the profession, the pastor must go by reason and charity, while only proof or *violenta praesumptio* of ungodliness is sufficient reason to excommunicate.²⁸

To cut off any possible danger that a pastor might admit someone who makes a profession of something short of justifying faith, Baxter makes two qualifications with respect to what he means by a profession²⁹: (1) a profession must be *signum mentis* and (2) it must be a profession both *de praesenti* and *de futuro*.³⁰ The former requirement means that the profession is not just

²⁵ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, sigs. d1^v-d2^r, pp. 128-32, 137-40. For this point, cf. Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 97; Mayor, *Lord's Supper*, pp. 133-34.

²⁶ In fact, Baxter repeatedly makes the charge that if he has difficulty identifying justifying faith in his parishioners, so does Blake in identifying dogmatical faith (Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, sig. d3^v, pp. 8, 12, 237-38, 376, 425). After all, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly dogmatical faith is, and many doubt just as much of their dogmatical faith as of their justifying faith.

²⁷ To strengthen his argument Baxter distinguishes different types of right: (1) the right to baptism by grant from God (*debitum*), (2) the right arising from providence putting one in possession of baptism (mere natural collation or *non iniustum*), and (3) the minister's duty to baptize (*iustum*). The first gives a true title or right to baptism upon justifying faith. According to the third right, a minister may baptize *iustum* even if the profession is only *ore tenus* and not from the heart (*Certain Disputations*, pp. 251-54, 261; for a somewhat different distinction, see pp. 351-55 [incorrect pagination]).

²⁸ Baxter's development tends toward a greater emphasis on the acceptance of someone's credible profession as a sufficient basis for communion. In his own account of the changes in his theological sentiments, Baxter comments: "I am not too narrow in my Principles of Church Communion as once I was: I more plainly perceive the difference between the Church as *Congregate* or visible, and as *Regenerate* or Mystical: and between *Sincerity* and *Profession*; and that a *Credible Profession* is proof sufficient of a Man's Title to Church Admission: and that the Profession is *Credible in foro Ecclesiae*, which is not disproved. I am not for narrowing the Church more than Christ himself alloweth us; nor for robbing him of any of his Flock" (*RB*, I.130). Shealy correctly comments: "Baxter demands that pastors respect a man's word unless, of course, his *whole* life again and again contradicts his spoken word" ("Power of the Present," pp. 291-92). Since Baxter's views on discipline are not at stake here, I will only comment that his *Certain Disputations* gives some valuable insights into his opinion, and that it is obvious that his charity in judgment stretched far (pp. 281-349).

²⁹ Baxter defines a profession as "*a solemn voluntary declaration (expression, or confession) of our faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; (in answer, usually, to the Interrogation of the Minister) with a giving up our name to God, by solemn sponson, and renouncing the Flesh, the World, and the Devil (or in general, all inconsistent waies)*" (*Certain Disputations*, p. 4).

³⁰ By singling out these two qualifications I do not mean to suggest that these were the only ones for Baxter. In fact, he numbers five requirements for a valid profession (*Certain Disputations*, pp. 9-11). The two qualifications mentioned above are of special significance in the debate with Blake.

required *propter se*, but for the signifying of our minds. This implies that reason and charity are needed for the minister's judgment and that one cannot be satisfied with apparent lies. The requirement that a profession be *de praesenti* means that one not only takes Christ as one's Savior for the future, admitting only the need for him, "It is a *present* consent, that Christ be *presently* my onely Saviour, or a *present* acceptance of him to be *presently* my onely Saviour that I must Profess."³¹ Thus, Baxter preempts any attempt to define a profession of justifying faith in such a way as to obviate the need for the adjective "justifying." By qualifying his definition of a profession in this way, Baxter wants to safeguard the prerequisite of full, justifying faith for admission to the sacraments.

SACRAMENTS AND COVENANT

The Covenant: Universal or Church-Bound

Since much of the argument between Baxter and Blake concerns the kind of faith that is requisite for admission to church ordinances, it is to be expected that the difference of opinion is caused by a difference in understanding of the role of faith in the sacraments. This is indeed the case. Baxter continually insists that "it is a mutual Covenant that must bee entered in Baptism."³² Blake, though by no means denying the conditionality of the covenant, does not accept the corollary that faith is sealed as well as the promise. According to Blake, "faith is not sealed to, but remission of sins, or Salvation [is sealed to] upon condition of faith. . . ."³³ For Baxter, however, the very partaking of the sacrament means that one gives oneself to God in covenant. The sacraments are signs and seals of faith. Says Baxter,

The sacramental *Actions* are signs, as well as the *substances* of Bread and Wine. The *Offer* with *Take, eat*, signifieth the Offer of Christ to us, to bee Received and Applied: The *Taking* and *Eating* and *Drinking* signifieth our *Acceptance* and *Application* of him. With himself is offered the pardon of sin, and given to all that Accept him, which by *Taking, Eating* and *Drinking* wee profess to do.³⁴

Baxter attaches great significance to the human consent given in the act of participation: It is a sacramental act and must be sacramentally interpreted.

At this juncture the significant connection between the sacraments and the covenant becomes evident. The difference of opinion about the covenant of

³¹ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, pp. 43–44; cf. pp. 506–7.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 297; cf. pp. 59–62, 123–24, 258, 450.

³³ Blake, *Covenant Sealed*, pp. 171–72.

³⁴ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, pp. 123–24.

grace is the main issue behind the disagreement on the sacraments. In his *Account*, Baxter begins his section on the requirement of dogmatical faith for baptism with an exposition of his understanding of the word "covenant."³⁵ To understand Baxter's comments in their immediate context it is necessary to realize that Blake is of the opinion that the covenant is broader than election and that the right to baptism does, therefore, not rest on justifying faith, but has a broader foundation.³⁶

Baxter states that the word "covenant" can be taken either for God's part, or for man's part, or for both conjunct by way of mutuality.³⁷ He then discusses the various meanings of covenant when taken for God's part. In the process, he makes some intricate distinctions. Because of the significance of the matter it is worthwhile to trace these distinctions. The main one is that between absolute and conditional promises; the former can either apply to God's promise to Christ concerning men, or to men themselves.³⁸ When applied to people, this absolute promise may either be common — such as the promise of the Savior to fallen mankind, the promise to Noah that the earth would never be drowned again, the promise of gospel proclamation to all nations, and so forth — or particular, such as the promise of male superiority, superiority of birthright, and promises specifically to Israel. In this sense, the wicked may be said to be under a covenant or promise. But, says Baxter, to speak here of a covenant or a promise would be to use improper speech.

With regard to conditional promises, Baxter distinguishes particular promises (of temporal blessings, also for wicked people) and common promises. After rejecting the Arminian view — which, he says, Blake's view closely resembles — Baxter comes to discuss the "common or general promise-conditional, which I acknowledge, is the new Law of grace, or of faith."³⁹ The scope of this covenant is, in a sense, worldwide:

³⁵ Baxter, *Account* (1654), pp. 58–67.

³⁶ See esp. Blake, *Vindiciae foederis*, pp. 189–205, the chapter entitled, "The Covenant of Grace in Gospel-times admits Christians in profession in a state of unregeneration, and is not limited in the bounds of it to the Elect regenerate."

³⁷ Baxter, *Account* (1654), p. 58.

³⁸ Baxter does not use the term *pactum salutis*. He does make the interesting observation that "the elect may be said to be in Covenant before they are born . . ." (*Account* [1654], p. 58). But he probably only means to say that men can be said to be in covenant since Christ, as born Mediator under the law of mediation, had a promise for them. Baxter does not refer to an eternal covenant of redemption. He expresses his reservation about such a doctrine (*ibid.*, p. 115). Cf. Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 212–13.

³⁹ Baxter, *Account* (1654), p. 61. Baxter does not go so far as to accuse Blake of Arminianism on the point of common grace. He does see a parallel, however: as Arminians and Jesuits hold to the common promise of supernatural means of revelation on condition of the right use of natural revelation, and as they hold to the common promise of special grace on condition of the right use

As it is a conditional promise on Gods part, or a Law of grace enacted conditionally giving Christ and Life to all men, so All men are under it, or the subjects of it: that is, All the whole world, as to the tenour of the Law of grace, following the meer enacting; and all that hear the Gospel, as to the promulgation.⁴⁰

The whole world is under covenant, says Baxter. Blake, however, is only willing to grant that the visible church is in covenant with God. He distinguishes between an external and an internal covenant. Both are one and the same covenant, but some are only in it by outward profession, whereas others are in it by justifying faith.⁴¹ Baxter rejects this distinction: "But Mr. B's common phrase is, that they are (in the outward Covenant) and what that is, I cannot tell."⁴² Since it is God's covenant act, it cannot be outward, maintains Baxter.

This does not mean that Baxter does not distinguish within the covenant. He views all the world as being, in a sense, "under the covenant." Then fol-

of common grace, so does Blake hold to the common promise of church privileges on condition of a faith not justifying (ibid., pp. 60–61). Baxter is afraid that Blake will take the next step and will make special grace God's obligatory gift upon man's good use of common grace (ibid., p. 106). Baxter even admits that if he himself were to believe that common grace entitles people to baptism, "I must needs believ that they had Right to Remission of sin in Christ's blood; seeing God appointed no Baptism but what is for the Remission of sin" (*Certain Disputations*, p. 508). In *Covenant Sealed*, Blake seems to take revenge for Baxter's insinuations. Blake accuses Baxter almost outright of Arminianism when he speaks of "Mr. Baxter, who makes *common and special graces to differ onely gradually* . . ." (*Covenant Sealed*, p. 151). Baxter, incensed, replies: "It is a *Gross untruth* unworthy a Divine and a Brother, that I *hold common and special Grace to differ only gradually*" (*Certain Disputations*, p. 476). Baxter's position is, in fact, that natural light has "a tendency to their [i.e., the heathens'] further advancement," and gives them "sufficient encouragement to go on in the chearfull use of those means, in possibilities and probabilities of success; so that they are unexcusable that use them not" (*Account* [1654], p. 60; cf. *Universal Redemption* [London, 1694], pp. 456–80).

⁴⁰ Baxter, *Account* (1654), p. 61. Elsewhere, Baxter states that the right to baptism of notoriously ungodly people cannot be the result of conditional remission of sin, "for then no more is given then all the World hath (at least that hear the Gospel) even persecuting Infidels; and then all they may as well bee baptized; for God pardoneth all upon condition they repent and believ" (*Certain Disputations*, p. 260; cf. pp. 312, 421). Baxter consistently qualifies his statements about the universal enactment of the promise by referring only to those that have actually heard the gospel. In the preface of *Certain Disputations*, Baxter expresses his agreement with Amyraut on the point of the universality of redemption (sigs. b1^v–c2^v; cf. p. 38). He states that he has not taken his views from Amyraut, however, but from his reading of Twisse (sig. b3^v).

⁴¹ Blake, *Covenant Sealed*, pp. 83–86, 124–25.

⁴² Baxter, *Account* (1654), p. 66. Baxter does admit of the distinction between "internal spiritual communion with hearty Saints; and External communion with Professed Saints" (*Certain Disputations*, p. 37). This distinction does not really run parallel to Blake's distinction between internal and external covenant, as Baxter understands a profession of saving faith to have been made before communion takes place. In the case of external communion this profession was hypocritical. Blake does not accept that all who are in the outward covenant have made a profession of saving faith.

lows a subtle shift in the use of prepositions: "All these waies, or in these respects [i.e., with respect to the promulgation of the gospel], I yield that wicked men, or unregenerate men, may be *under* promise, or Gods Covenant. But this is not strictly to (be *in* Covenant:) nor is this it that the right of Baptism belongs to. . . ." ⁴³ Here Baxter subtly distinguishes between being "under" and "in" the covenant without drawing the reader's attention to this shift in the use of prepositions.

Baxter's distinction between being "under" and "in" the covenant seems similar to Blake's distinction between external and internal covenant. There are two important differences, however. First, Blake limits the external covenant to the visible church, whereas Baxter extends the promulgation of the covenant to the whole world. Second, to be externally in the covenant entitles one to the sacraments, in Blake's view. For Baxter the promulgation of the covenant gives no title at all: first the condition must be fulfilled. In fact, strictly speaking, a person can only be said to be in covenant with God upon the fulfillment of the condition.

Absolute Sealing of the Conditional Covenant

It is clear why Baxter emphasizes the mutuality of the covenant in partaking of the sacraments: man must first fulfill the condition of the enacted and promulgated covenant. As long as the condition is not fulfilled there is, strictly speaking, no covenant at all, and, consequently, no right to baptism either. ⁴⁴ This is also the reason why Baxter and Blake differ on the kind of sealing that takes place in the sacrament. Blake asserts that God seals the promise conditionally, since not all that partake have justifying faith. The covenant only demands it from them. Says Blake: "The seale makes good the grant, but when the grant is upon termes, upon supposal of duty, (call it duty, or call it condition) the seale is not absolute, but is conditional." ⁴⁵ Baxter wants to combine the absolute and the conditional. It is Baxter's opinion that "[t]his Conditional Promise is sealed Absolutely and actually." ⁴⁶ He explains this seemingly cryptic statement as follows:

⁴³ Baxter, *Account* (1654), p. 61 (emphasis added). Baxter also argues that it "is one thing to say as I do (*That the Conditional Covenant is made to the non-Elect*) And another thing to say as you [i.e., Blake] term it (*that they are in the Covenant*) For that word is very ambiguous" (*Certain Disputations*, p. 238). Note here the distinction between "to" and "in," paralleling the distinction between "under" and "in" mentioned above.

⁴⁴ Baxter continually emphasizes the conditionality of the covenant (*Certain Disputations*, pp. 72–73, 77–78, 238–39, 353 [incorrect pagination; sig. Zz'], 361–63).

⁴⁵ Blake, *Vindicie foederis*, p. 34. Cf. pp. 34–46; *Covenant Sealed*, pp. 333–49.

⁴⁶ Baxter, *Account* (1654), p. 121.

I conceive God sealeth Actually, and therefore Absolutely, before men truly or really believe, when a Minister on his Command and by his Commission doth it. . . . Yet though God Seal the Conditional Promise Absolutely to such as profess to receive it; that is, though he hereby attest that he owns that Promise as his Act or Deed; yet doth he not either Exhibite or Convey Right to Christ and his Benefits, nor yet oblige himself for the future, Absolutely, but Conditionally only.⁴⁷

Baxter thus safeguards both elements: the reality of the covenant grant, as well as the conditionality of that grant. Baxter does not say that the promise or grant itself is absolute—it is conditional. The sealing, however, is absolute: It is a real, actual sealing. By maintaining the conditionality of the promise, Baxter is able to insist on the need to fulfill the *conditio sine qua non*. By arguing that this promise is absolutely sealed, he ensures the universal and absolute availability of the promise. There is a universal covenant of grace as far as the mere enactment is concerned. Man can only properly be said to be in covenant, however, when the condition is fulfilled.

It cannot be denied that consistency is a strong element in Baxter's position. At first, he may seem to go from one extreme to another: Being perhaps overly inclusive with regard to the object of faith (including Christ's Lordship in addition to his Priesthood) and the relation between faith and works (both being *conditiones sine quibus non*), he seems to become overly narrow when it comes to admission to the church ordinances. From the viewpoint of Blake and other moderate Presbyterians this may indeed seem inconsistent. Once the internal coherence of Baxter's replies is discovered, however, the inconsistencies disappear. Baxter consistently applies the same criterion: The promise of the gospel or the gospel grant is universally enacted. It is suspended, however, until the fulfillment of the condition. Once this condition appears to be fulfilled according to one's profession, the justified person receives the title to the covenant promise, becomes a saint, and receives admission to the church and its sacraments.

SACRAMENTS AND THE CERTAINTY OF FAITH

Certainty and Rebaptism

Despite the consistency in Baxter's argument, some questions that arise also in connection with the nature of justification resurface. In fact, they stand out more clearly because the issue has immediate practical consequences regard-

⁴⁷ Ibid.

ing church membership and admission to the sacraments. These questions lie at the heart of Baxter's doctrine of justification — the relation between the absolute and the conditional in the covenant. Baxter does deal with some of the difficulties involved. He does not do this, however, because he wants to clear up some misunderstandings. He deals with the issues mainly because Blake forces him to do so. Blake compels him to face up to the consequences of his doctrine.

It has already been noted that Blake detects antipaedobaptist tendencies in Baxter's theology. Indeed, he forces Baxter to defend himself against this charge. Baxter distinguishes a covenant right *coram Deo* and *coram ecclesia*. The former gives proper right to baptism, whereas the latter only gives a right because of the minister's duty to accept a credible profession of justifying faith. Blake attacks Baxter's willingness to baptize those of whom he is not certain have the faith that entitles them to baptism. Blake comments that considerate men will pause before accepting the distinction of right *in foro Dei* and *in foro ecclesiae*:

They may yet tell him [i.e., Baxter], that a door is here opened to Anabaptisme, or multiplication of Baptisme. A new door, of which either nothing or very little hath ever been spoken. When discovery shall be made, (as according to these principles it may be often made) that the title, when Baptisme was administred was barely seeming; then all was null *ab initio* in such proceedings: and as such persons alwayes were in the eye of God, so now in the eye of men, they are unbaptized persons: And in case God ever vouchsafe the grace of conversion to this man, he is now by Divine appointment to seek baptism.⁴⁸

Blake is trying to force Baxter down the slippery slope argument: If the sacrament involves a mutual sealing, does this not lead to the consequence of rebaptism?

Judging by the repeated attention that Baxter gives to this point, the charge must have made some impact on him.⁴⁹ The type of reply that he produces supports this assumption. It is easiest simply to retort that Blake's position leads to the same consequence. Baxter maintains that the ignorance of many in the parish concerning the essentials of the Christian faith would force Blake to rebaptize them in case he would ever find out that they had been baptized without even having dogmatical faith.⁵⁰ This counterargument

⁴⁸ Blake, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 142. Cf. Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, pp. 411–13, 509–12.

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, pp. 70–71, 190–91, 315–23, 411–14, 509–12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 190, 316, 510–11; cf. p. 412: "[I]f Mr Blake will but teach that all should be rebaptized, whose parents are now discovered to want the Title of a Dogmatical faith, I much fear, hee will yet have more rebaptized persons in one County than now is in Ten, at least." Baxter

has some value since it seems indeed impossible to determine with infallible certainty who in the parish has dogmatical faith.

Still, this reply does not absolve Baxter from the need to defend his own position. Being forced, therefore, to accept the practical outcome of his position, he makes a distinction between essentials and integrals or accidentals. The act of profession is only accidental to the sacrament. This profession is a duty necessary to participation in the benefits of the covenant. The essentials of the sacrament are performed by the minister and therefore do not need to be redone. Only that which was undone needs to be redone: (1) the person's duty (of faith and profession) and (2) God's grant (actually) of the benefits.⁵¹ Baxter admits that he hesitates somewhat regarding the validity of this distinction. Even without the distinction between essentials and accidentals, however, he comes to basically the same solution: There remains a distinction between the nullity of the external part and the nullity of God's actual engagement or covenant to the sinner. If baptism is administered with water in the name of the triune God, and if the party has not openly disavowed the Christian faith, all the exterior essentials are present. The external part should not be redone.⁵² If a person repents from hypocrisy, all he needs to do is renew his covenant in front of the congregation; he ought not to be rebaptized.⁵³

Has Baxter successfully warded off Blake's accusation of antipaedobaptist tendencies? By way of critical evaluation, two questions must be asked about Baxter's attempt to deal with his difficulties. First, if God had never actually been in covenant with a person who dissimulated when professing saving faith, this means, on Baxter's principles, that there was never more than a mere enactment of the covenant. The covenant was enacted in this same way to the whole world. The question is this: If there is nothing more *ex parte Dei* with the dissimulating baptized church member than with any other unregenerate person, does this not mean that the baptism was indeed a "nullity," and also that the external rite was completely empty, since both God's and man's parts were absent? Judging by what Baxter calls the "exterior Essen-

mentions several examples of ignorance that he has come across in his ministry, such as identifying the sun with the Son and absolute ignorance concerning the natures of Christ and of his work of redemption (ibid., pp. 190, 316, 349, 412, 510–11).

⁵¹ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, p. 315.

⁵² Beougher correctly observes: "For Baxter, the key in the validity of baptism appears to be the outward ceremony being performed correctly" ("Conversion," p. 172, n. 75).

⁵³ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, pp. 316–17; cf. pp. 411, 510. Interestingly, the distinction between the external and internal dimensions of the sacrament was commonplace among separatists as well. For them it served the same purpose of putting up a barrier against rebaptism as the logical outcome of a greater stress on the subjective element in baptism (Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 66).

tials," if there is water but no actual deliverance of the promise of renewal, if there is baptism in the name of the triune God but no actual delivery of God's promise, and if there is but an outward profession without corresponding internal regeneration, does this not mean that the external elements have lost all meaning? Therefore, are the external and the internal as separable as Baxter suggests? A second problem concerns the perseverance of the saints. If justifying faith is a requirement for baptism, what is one to think of baptized infants who turn out to be unbelievers? It is difficult for Baxter to combine a paedobaptist stand with a strictly Calvinist position on the perseverance of the saints.⁵⁴ Being forced to choose between the two, Baxter tends to opt for the former.

Sacraments and Assurance of Faith

More or less the same takes place with regard to the doctrine of the assurance of faith — Baxter feels himself forced into a defensive position. He denies that the requirement of justifying faith limits the ordinances to those who have assurance of the sincerity of their faith: "And it will not follow, as you pretend, that then none must come that have not the certainty of their sincerity in the Faith, as I shall further shew when I come purposely to your Objections."⁵⁵ When Baxter comments on Blake's objections, he again begins by retorting that Blake's position entails the same difficulty as his own: "I would fain know many of those, how meer Dogmatical believers are sure that they have a Dogmatical faith?"⁵⁶ Baxter uses several arguments in the defense of his own position. Most significantly, he maintains that all one needs is "that faith which is sincere and saving, whether wee know it so to bee or not."⁵⁷ Baxter distinguishes between faith and the assurance of faith, only requiring the former for participation in the sacraments.⁵⁸

The question of whether assurance is part of faith also plays a role in the issue of whether the sealing of the promise is absolute or conditional. Blake agrees that assurance does not belong to the essence of faith. Nevertheless, faith can be described by one of the most eminent acts it produces: assurance.

⁵⁴ For Baxter's hesitant position with regard to perseverance, see below, pp. 68–69; Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 317–20.

⁵⁵ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, p. 122.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵⁸ In the case of hesitance to partake, Baxter comments, "[W]e are to let them know that it is the *thing*, and not their *Certainty of the thing* that God hath made necessary" (*Certain Disputations*, pp. 194–95).

The sacrament seals the very promise of forgiveness, albeit in a conditional manner.⁵⁹ Blake constructs the following syllogism: "If God give me Christ, he will give me justification and salvation by Christ: but God gives me Christ: therefore he will give me justification and salvation."⁶⁰ Blake considers the minor of this argument to be sealed by tendering the elements in the sacrament. When the sacrament is tendered, Christ himself is given. He concludes from this that the conclusion of the syllogism is sealed as well. Justification and salvation are given in the sacrament.

For Baxter the argument is fallacious. After all, the tendering of the elements is conditional, not absolute. The minor of Blake's argument, that "God gives me Christ," is dependent on the fulfillment of the condition. Where the condition is not fulfilled, Christ is not actually given. Baxter can therefore not agree that the statement "I am justified" is a proposition *de fide*.⁶¹ It can only be a result of faith. Thus, Baxter strictly separates faith and assurance. Only the former is required for admission to the sacraments.

Of course, this does not solve the pastoral problem, and Baxter is aware of that. In the lives of the parishioners it soon appears that the requirement of faith for partaking of the sacraments results in questions regarding the assurance of this faith. Therefore, Baxter further counsels that "our Actions must follow the smallest prevalent persuasions of our judgment, though far short of full Assurance."⁶² Baxter therefore does not turn the believer away from himself, but directs him to himself to judge what is most prevalent: sincere faith or unbelief.⁶³

In overcoming one's hesitance it must also be kept in mind that sacramental participation is a duty, just as prayer that pleads on God's promises, thanksgiving for adoption as the Father's child, and communion with fellow-saints are duties. Baxter states that these duties may not be neglected for lack

⁵⁹ Blake, *Vindiciae foederis*, p. 43.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41 (emphasis throughout in original).

⁶¹ Baxter argues his case by means of two syllogisms. The first one is "Scripture says that all men shall rise. Reason says that I am a man. Therefore I shall rise." The major is a statement *de fide*. Moreover, in Baxter's opinion, it is the weakest premise of the argument. Since *conclusio sequitur partem debiliorem* the conclusion can also be regarded *de fide*. But the argument for the attainment of assurance of faith works differently, in Baxter's opinion. Here the argument would run "All sincere believers are justified. I am a sincere believer. Therefore I am justified." Here the minor is *pars debiliior*: Since the minor is not *de fide* [!] the conclusion is not *de fide* either (*Account* [1654], p. 127).

⁶² Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, p. 193. Baxter thinks he can give this advice because "[t]he judgment of few or none is in *aequilibrio*, but it swayeth and determineth either to judge that they are sincere, or that they are not" (*ibid.*, p. 374).

⁶³ Mayor concludes that "Baxter seems to make reception of Communion dependent upon an intense process of introspection, with a decision based on the careful weighing of probabilities" (*Lord's Supper*, p. 132).

of assurance. Such a reduction of duties "would make but unhappy work in the Church, and would do much to the extirpation of a very great part (if not the farr greatest) of the service of God."⁶⁴

As with the problem of rebaptism, so in the question of assurance of faith Baxter is compelled to extricate himself from the difficulties inherent in his views on admission to the church ordinances. Here, also, Baxter's attempt to disentangle himself is not entirely successful. He makes the right to the sacraments dependent on justifying faith as the condition. If the condition remains unfulfilled, however, the covenant is only enacted. In this case there is no promise that has actually been delivered; there is no actual covenant. The result is soul-searching: Is sincere faith present or not? Uncertainty concerning the fulfillment of the condition creates doubts regarding the actuality of the covenant. This sets off the same process of introspection common in the high-Calvinist and hyper-Calvinist theology that Baxter opposes.

⁶⁴ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, p. 193; cf. pp. 374–75.

III

Original Sin

ORIGINAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

Original Righteousness as Concreated

At the end of his life, Baxter looks back and confesses a number of childhood sins. He begins his confession as follows:

Though from the first of my remembrance I liked Religious Goodness, and feared sinning since my Father had talkt to me of God and Sin and the World to come, yet it was many Years before I was humbled for my Original Sin, or felt much of the need of a Saviour, or understood the Doctrine of the Scripture, but only delighted in the Historical part: And though my Conscience troubled me for a Lie to scape Danger, it did not always keep me from it.¹

Baxter does not say why it took him many years before he was humbled for his original sin.² More significant for the present purpose, however, is the very observation that Baxter feels the need to be humbled for original sin.

¹ Richard Baxter, *Penitent Confession* (London, 1691), p. 8.

² Baxter describes his doctrine of original sin in *The Divine Life* (1663), in *Works*, 3:790–92, 795 [13:91–96, 106–7]; *Two Disputations; Of Imputation* (London, 1675), pp. 32–35; *Catholicke Theologie* (London, 1675), II.103–6, 109–12; *Methodus Theologiae* (London, 1681), I.xv.353–80 (most of this section is a Latin translation of *Two Disputations*, pp. 65–143); *End of Doctrinal Controversies* (London, 1691), pp. 94–87 (incorrect pagination, sigs. G7^v–H2^r).

For secondary literature on Baxter's doctrine of original sin, see George P. Fisher, "The Theology of Richard Baxter," *BSTR* 9 (1852): 144–48; idem, "Richard Baxter's 'End of Controversy,'" *BSABR* 12 (1855): 362–66; Packer, "Redemption and Restoration," pp. 150–55; Sidney H. Rooy, "The Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition: A Study of Representative Puritans: Richard Sibbes, Richard Baxter, John Eliot, Cotton Mather, and Jonathan Edwards" (PhD diss., Free University, Amsterdam, 1965; Delft, The Netherlands: Meinema, 1965), pp. 71–72; David J. Richards, "Richard Baxter's Theory of the Atonement" (master's thesis, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill., 1982), pp. 26–31; Beougher, "Conversion," pp. 54–57.

This confirms his view of theology as not just a contemplative, but also as an affective and a practical science. Theology is "the affective, practical doctrine or science concerning God's reign over men."³

Concern for the love and worship of God penetrates Baxter's doctrine of original sin. When he defends his view of the *status integritatis*, for instance, his arguments have an obvious concern for charity and love of God as man's ultimate end. Baxter rejects the Thomist view that grace in the prelapsarian state was supernatural. Says Baxter,

Original Righteousness was Natural: that is, 1. It was not given him [i.e., Adam] at any time following his Creation, 2. Nor was it given at the same time, as a thing distinct from the soundness, and rectitude, and integrity of his nature: but was that rectitude it self, and as much concreated with man, as health and beauty with the body.⁴

Original righteousness dates from the same time as Adam's creation. Baxter wants to exclude any possible misunderstanding — original righteousness is not separate from nature. He cuts off any thought which, while admitting that original righteousness and the integrity of nature originate at the same time, still maintains that the two are separate. Baxter adds, therefore, that original righteousness is natural integrity itself. It is not a supernatural gift.

This view has several consequences. If Adam had not fallen, original righteousness would have been propagated to his posterity. After all, it is a natural rectitude and is, therefore, propagated in a natural way.⁵ Furthermore, the admission that original righteousness is not a *donum superadditum* but a concreated, natural gift is an important argument in favor of original sin. When the Fall

³ "Doctrina vel Scientia-affectiva *practica de Regno Dei super hominibus*" (Baxter, *Methodus Theologiae*, I.i.3). Baxter refuses to restrict theology to being either contemplative, affective, or practical in character:

Some theological authors argue whether theology must be said to be speculative, affective, or practical. As if someone would ask whether fire causes motion, light, or warmth, or whether the human soul is vitally active, intellective, or volitive. But just as this triune virtue is essential to the soul, so also to true, wholesome theology it is essential that it is affective, practical knowledge, that is, fitted for the perfection of the intellect, the will, and the practice; although equivocally, a merely speculative part may, as such, be called theology. [Contendunt quidam Scriptores Theologici, utrū *Theologia* dicenda sit, *speculativa*, *affectiva*, an *practica*? Quasi quereretur aliquis an Ignis sit *Motivus*, *Illuminativus*, an *Calefactivus*? aut Anima humana sit, *Vitaliter activa*, *Intellectiva vel Volitiva*? At sicut virtus hæc una-trina est *Animæ* Essentialis, ita & *Theologie* veræ salutari Essentialis est, ut sit, *scientia-affectiva-practica*, ad *Intellectus* scilicet, *Voluntatis & Praxeos* perfectionem adaptata; quamvis æquivocè pars sola speculativa, quā talis, dici possit *Theologia*.] (Ibid., I.i.3)

⁴ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 66.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 67, 215.

destroyed original righteousness, nature was not left intact. Nature itself was vitiated.⁶

In denying that original righteousness includes sanctifying grace, Baxter rejects the Thomist view that posited that Adam's state of original righteousness included sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*).⁷ Baxter interprets Ecclesiastes 7:29—"Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright"—in a typically Protestant (as well as Franciscan) manner: "It is expressly said, *Ecc. 7.29. that God made man upright*: but his righteousness was his *uprightness*: *go. he also made him righteous*. So much of that question."⁸ Baxter does not refer to the varying opinions on this topic among Roman Catholic schools of thought. Instead, he treats the issue as one "wherein the Papists differ from our Divines."⁹

Baxter's arguments illustrate the practical scope of his thinking: "Man was naturally able and disposed to know God to be God, and his God: *go*. He was naturally able and disposed to love him as God, and his God: which is the sum of his Original Righteousness."¹⁰ Man has an "inward *Virtue* in habit or disposition";¹¹ God did not make man "*sine Amore Dei dispositivo*."¹² Since man was created *in imagine Dei*, it is "impossible that the moral Image of God should be without Original Righteousness, and the love of God."¹³ It is this image to which man is restored in regeneration.¹⁴ Man was made for God "as his ultimate end,"¹⁵ and "without Charity, (in the habit or inclination), and so without Original Righteousness, man had not been disposed to this end. . . ."¹⁶ Baxter's defense of the position that original righteousness was natural in Adam illustrates the practical scope of his theory. The love of God, charity, and God as man's ultimate end are all descriptions of what Baxter means by original righteousness. Baxter's definition of original righteousness reflects this same practical tendency:

1. It consisteth in the souls inclination to God as God; that is in the habit or disposition, or propensity of the soul to love God for himself, as the infinite good, and also as our felicity. 2. In the understandings

⁶ Ibid., pp. 67–68.

⁷ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1:159.

⁸ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 74. Cf. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1:159, 161.

⁹ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 242.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 68 (*Methodus Theologiae*, I.xv.354).

¹¹ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 69.

¹² Baxter, *Methodus Theologiae*, I.xv.355.

¹³ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 70.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 74 (*Methodus Theologiae*, I.xv.356).

¹⁵ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 70 (*Methodus Theologiae*, I.xv.355).

¹⁶ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 71.

disposition to know God as one to be thus beloved. 3. In a holy vivacity Godward. 4. In the ordination and subjection of all the inferior faculties to the understanding and will thus inclined. 5. And *relatively*, in the *innocency* hence resulting.¹⁷

In his natural state, both man's intellect and will were directed to God as God. This love of God was not an added sanctifying grace. It was a concreated, natural integrity.

Infants' Need for Redemption

Baxter's position on original righteousness has profound implications for his view on original sin. Original sin is not just *negatio*, but it is *privatio boni moralis*.¹⁸ Original sin is a change in the direction of habit. It is a change in inclination from love for God to inordinate self-love.¹⁹ If original sin were merely *negatio* it would only be an affliction. As it is, however, the loss of the right to life is a punishment.²⁰ The privation of rectitude itself is sin.²¹

If the privation of rectitude were not *privatio* but merely *negatio*, how could infants have any need for a Savior, as they had no sinful condition? Says Baxter,

Those, therefore, who say that Christ died for infants that he might merit supernatural grace and heavenly glory for them, when they were nevertheless wholly free from sins, speak absurdities: as if God would give his grace to certain innocent people on this condition, that he would first justly crucify his innocent Son!²²

Baxter's position on original righteousness serves an ancillary function for his soteriology. If the loss of original righteousness is no more than a *negatio boni*, there is no need for a Savior from original sin. In his defense of original sin this theme receives constant attention. Death reigns over infants. Therefore, sin is imputed to them.²³ This death is an act of God's justice on them.²⁴ As

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁸ Baxter, *Methodus Theologiae*, I.xv.362 (*Two Disputations*, pp. 91–92).

¹⁹ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 76 (*Methodus Theologiae*, I.xv.356).

²⁰ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 192.

²¹ Ibid., p. 95.

²² "Qui dicunt igitur Christum pro Infantibus mortuum esse, ut illis gratiam supernaturalem promereretur, & gloriam cœlestem, cum tamen peccatorum omnino expertes erant, absurda loquuntur: Quasi Deus suam Gratiam Innocentibus quibusdam daret, sub eâ conditione ut filium suum æquē Innocentem prius cruciaret!" (Baxter, *Methodus Theologiae*, I.xv.363). Cf. *Two Disputations*, p. 95.

²³ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, pp. 81–82.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 87–88.

members of Christ, however, they are saved by him. Their salvation from sin, their being washed by Christ, and their being baptized for the remission of sin all imply that they have original sin.²⁵ Baxter asks rhetorically, "For to what end should he mediate for them? or how can he redeem them that need not a redemption? or how should he reconcile them to God, that never were at enmity with him? or how can he wash them that were never unclean?"²⁶ Justification of infants only makes sense if original sin is accepted by way of premise.²⁷

Having said this, however, Baxter softens his position somewhat by maintaining that original sin does not have a degree of sinfulness that is equal to actual sins. The reason is that only actual sins are entirely voluntary; only actual sins are fully in our power.²⁸ The punishment for original sin is only called punishment "by analogy of attribution": We did not commit that sin personally; it is seminal in Adam and in our more immediate parents.²⁹ This does not mean that original sin is only equivocally called sin. Rather, the guilt and punishment of original sin are called guilt and punishment in the same way that *accidens* is called *ens*.³⁰ Accidents do have being, but they are to be distinguished from the substance. Accidents may be detracted from being without the loss of being itself. Substances, however, have being in and of themselves, and cannot be detracted from being without losing the thing itself. Similarly, Baxter would insist that the guilt of original sin may be detracted from sin, while sin itself remains. The essence of Baxter's argument appears to be that the guilt of original sin is guilt, but not in as strict a manner as the guilt of actual sin.

God is therefore under no obligation to condemn anyone to eternal damnation for original sin only. To be sure, he does have the right to punish those who are guilty of original sin. But "it's another thing to be so far guilty, as that God *must* punish us, or else be unjust, or not attain the ends of right

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 92–96.

²⁶ Baxter, *Divine Life* (1664), in *Works*, 3:791 [13:92–93]. Cf. *Works*, 3:795 [13:106].

²⁷ Cf. Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.57, in which B [Baxter] rhetorically asks A [an Arminian], "What will you say if *Episcopius*, *Arminius*, *Corvinus*, are the men that deny most Universal Redemption, while the *Synod* [of Dort] maintaineth it? How can Christ die for the sins of *any Infants* in proper sense, if they have *no sin*, and deserve no punishment? Or be a Saviour to save them from sin and punishment that have none?"

²⁸ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 77 (*Methodus Theologia*, I.xv.357). Cf. idem, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, pp. 85–86 (incorrect pagination, sigs. H1^r–v).

²⁹ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, pp. 149–50; cf. pp. 153, 192.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 149–50; cf. p. 192. In Aristotelian logic, it was common to distinguish between *univocum* (for which both objects have the same name and nature), *aequivocum* (for which the same name is applied to objects of a different nature), and *analogum* (for which the objects have the same name and the same nature, but each in a different manner). The *analogum* was subdivided into *analogum proportionis* (for which the objects have a similar nature, but in different degrees) and *analogum attributionis* (for which the objects have the same nature, but the second only in dependence on the first). Accidents have being only in dependence on substance, though both are *ens*. Cf. Kendall, *Vindication* (London, 1653), I.iii.93–94.

Government, by ordinary means.”³¹ Adults are never condemned to everlasting death only because of original sin. Additionally, children derive from their parents only “such an imperfect guilt, so called by analogie of attribution, as that God may [!] in vindictive justice inflict on them for the same, the penalty (*so called by the same analogy*) both of temporal death, and of eternal, at least as to the penalty of loss; supposing that it be not pardoned through Christ.”³² Since God has provided a remedy in the gospel, however, the “deserved evil” of damnation may be averted by means of repentance.³³

MODIFIED AUGUSTINIANISM

Original Sin Not Equal in All

Baxter not only insists that actual sin is more properly called sin than original sin; he also insists, against the antipaedobaptist Henry Danvers, that original sin itself is not equal in everyone. Some infants are in a worse state of pravity than others.³⁴ The reason is that children become guilty of violating the law by being in their parents’ loins:

[A]s God dealt with *Adam* and his seed under the Law or Covenant of Innocency, and we have our guilt of violating that Law from him, as being in his loins: so God joyneth children with their Parents (*variatis variandis*) under the Covenant of Grace, and we are in infancy *de jure* the *better* or *worse* for what our Parents were, are, or did. And that *not to be healed, not to be justified and saved*, is not now to infants a penalty of *Adam’s* sin alone, but of those Parents (or pro-Parents) in whom the Law of Grace doth judge the infant to have been, or done, or not done what was necessary.³⁵

Original sin is not equal in all because the actual sins of the parents were not all equally serious. If infants were to be condemned on account of Adam’s sin alone, the *reatus poenae*—the obligation to punishment—would be the same for everyone. As it is, nobody is condemned merely for participation in Adam’s sin. To begin with, Adam’s sin is not imputed in an immediate way: “*Adam’s* sin could not be, or is not made ours immediately, but as we derive it from our nearer Parents: For our *nature* is no otherwise from him.”³⁶ To

³¹ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 161; cf. pp. 178–79.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 172–73 (emphasis inverted).

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 15–16, 169–70.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³⁶ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.105. Cf. *ibid.*, II.71; *Two Disputations*, p. 181: “*Adam* delivered it not *immediately* to us. As we received our *nature* and *persons* from our *nearest Parents*, so did we therewith our *guilt of that sin*” (cf. pp. 37, 148).

be sure, Baxter does not deny the participation of later generations in Adam's sin. But this participation only becomes ours indirectly, through the line of the generations.

"Another Original Sin"

There is a further complicating factor. Not only are Adam's sins (mediately) imputed to us, but Baxter devotes his entire second disputation to the thesis that "in the *same kind* as we are guilty of *Adam's actual sin*, we are also guilty of the sins of our *nearest Parents*; allowing for some accidental differences, and also our guilt having a *remedy* at hand, which his had not that he knew of, we being under a pardoning covenant."³⁷ Adam's first sin is imputed to us indirectly, that is, by means of our parents. Now it appears that this is not all. Adam's later sins, as well as the actual sins of further generations, are also imputed to us. This amounts to no less than a double imputation. Baxter is of the opinion that "Divines have strangely erred, by over-looking the common Interest and Communion of all Parents and Children, and appropriating our Original Guilt to *Adam's* sin alone. . . ."³⁸

This broadening of original sin to the sins of nearer parents provokes the anger of Thomas Tully, the high-Calvinist principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. Tully charges that Baxter "has found Us another Original Sin of a much later Date then that which claims from Adam. O blind Divines who ever went before!"³⁹ Baxter does not deny that he accepts "another Original Sin." To the objection that his doctrine creates two types of original sin he replies that, indeed, *fundamentaliter* original sin is manifold. This means that it comes "from the desert of *many sins*."⁴⁰ Since the punishment remains one and the same, however, regardless of the amount of sins contributing to a person's original sin, *terminative* it is but one.⁴¹ The "*Terminus* is but one and the same, but the Foundation is divers."⁴² In defense of this double-imputation theory, Baxter appeals to a number of church fathers and later divines, such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Peter Martyr, Wallaeus, Ursinus, and Gataker.⁴³ He further cites numerous texts from Scrip-

³⁷ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 147.

³⁸ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.104.

³⁹ "aliud invenisse peccatum originale multò ceterius, quàm quod ab Adamo traductum est. O cæcos antè Theologos, quicunque unquam fuistis!" (Thomas Tully, *Justificatio Paulina* [Oxford, 1674], p. 128; trans. Tully, *Letter* [Oxford, 1675], p. 2; emphasis throughout in original).

⁴⁰ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 230.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 229–30.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 162; cf. p. 216.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22–33.

ture, most significantly the Second Commandment; Exod. 34:7; and Matt. 23:31, 35–36.⁴⁴

Federalism and the Arbitrariness of God's Will

When Baxter states that Adam's first sin is imputed indirectly he does not mean to deny that Adam's progeny sinned in Adam. He only wants to emphasize that this imputation takes place by means of the sins of the nearer parents. That he does not deny that original sin is also sin *in* Adam is clear from his opposition to the federalist view on imputation. Throughout the second disputation, as well as elsewhere, Baxter opposes the idea that God reckons Adam's posterity to be guilty without any real sin on their part: "He never made such a covenant with *Adam*, or any since, as some imagine, wherein he declareth that he will judge the Posterity guilty of the Parents sin further than their true desert or interest in it, meerly because God *will so judge*, or because he *will* impute the sins of one to another, without his desert. . . ."⁴⁵

Baxter opposes the federalist view mainly because of its emphasis on God's will, which makes God arbitrary. Baxter gives four reasons for his opposition to the federalist view: (1) it makes God the author of sin,⁴⁶ (2) it no longer regards God as judging according to truth,⁴⁷ (3) it renders God's will arbitrary,⁴⁸ and (4) there is no such covenant mentioned in Scripture.⁴⁹ These reasons indicate a fear of a nominalist-like elevation of God's will beyond his other attributes. This high-Calvinist emphasis on God's absolute power has done much to tempt the Arminians into their denial of original sin, insists Baxter.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 17, 19. Cf. *Catholick Theologie*, II.104–5. Baxter further appeals to Deut. 28:18; Eph. 2:3, 11–12; Gal. 2:15; Ps. 109:9–10, 12–16, 137:9; Job 21:19, 27:14, 17:5, 5:4; Joel 2:15–16; Nah. 3:10; Hos. 13:16; Jer. 29:32, 36:31, 22:28, 30; Isa. 14:20, 1:4; Ps. 21:10, 37:28, 106:27; Isa. 57:3; Mal. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:19–20; Jude 7; Deut. 2:34, 3:6, 32:25; Judg. 7:24–25; 1 Sam. 15:3; 1 Kings 11:39, 21:21; 2 Kings 17:20, 24:3–4; Ezek. 9:6; 2 Sam. 21; Matt. 27:25 (*Two Disputations*, pp. 198–212).

⁴⁵ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 147.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 196: "Otherwise God should be the cause of *sin*, as *sin*: for so to make *guilty*, is to make a man *really a sinner*. Our Parents may *will sin*, and so may do it *for us*, because we are *seminally* in them: but God cannot *will sin*." Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 147, 175; *Catholick Theologie*, II.111; Baxter, *Scripture Gospel defended* (London, 1690), p. 103.

⁴⁷ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 175: "But if he should determine or pronounce a man a sinner that is not, his judgment were not according to truth: but he should make that which is false become true by judging it true; which is no tolerable conceit." Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 147, 184; *Catholick Theologie*, II.111.

⁴⁸ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, pp. 175–76.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 176, 184; *Catholick Theologie*, II.111; *Scripture Gospel defended*, p. 103; *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 96 (incorrect pagination, sig. G8').

⁵⁰ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.105, 112.

Joshua Placaesus's View of Original Sin

Baxter continually insists that it is indeed our sin in Adam that is imputed to us. In doing so, Baxter opposes the federalist view on imputation. On the other side of the theological spectrum, Baxter's realism also opposes the denial of original sin in the thought of Simon Episcopius (1583–1643) and Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667).⁵¹ More noteworthy, perhaps, is that Baxter also disagrees with the more moderate Salmurian teaching on original sin. The mediating divine of Saumur, Joshua Placaesus, denied that Adam's sin itself was imputed to his posterity. In the well-known *Theses theologicæ in academia Salmvriensi* (1641), he argued "that original sin doth consist only in the *real qualitative corruption* of our nature, and not directly in any *imputation* of Adam's *actual sin* to us; and that there is no such direct imputation of his sin to us, but that it is only the *cause* of our proper Original sin, and not our *sin formally*. . . ."⁵² Although he never admitted that his views had been condemned by the Synod of Charenton (1644), Placaesus did soften his stand subsequent to this synod. In his *De imputatione Primi Peccati Adami* (1657), Placaesus clarified his views by distinguishing between mediate and immediate imputation. He now admitted that Adam's sin could be said to be imputed, but only in a mediate sense, "through and on account of the intervening corruption which resulted from Adam's sin."⁵³ Baxter

⁵¹ Baxter repeatedly opposes Jeremy Taylor by name (*Two Disputations*, pp. 67, 143; *Catholic Theologie*, II.109, 112). Baxter does not think that Arminius and Corvinus can be charged with a denial of original sin (*ibid.*, II.109–12).

⁵² Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 148. Cf. Placaesus, in Lewis Cappel et al., *Theses theologicæ* (Saumur, France, 1641), I.205–11. For Baxter's opposition to Placaesus, see *Two Disputations*, pp. 148, 213–24, 229; *idem*, *Catholic Theologie*, II.111. Baxter opposed the same theory in the Italian Reformer Peter Martyr (1500–1562); in the Scottish theologian at Saumur, John Cameron; and in the professor at the University of Montauban, Daniel Chamier (1565–1621) (*Two Disputations*, pp. 148–49, 223, 227–29).

For Placaesus's views on original sin, see John Quick, "Icones Sacræ Gallicanæ," DWL MS, transcribed by Hugh Hutton, 1863, pp. 536–38; Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium Designed for the Use of Theological Students* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1907), pp. 616–19; John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1959), pp. 42–46; G. C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, trans. Philip C. Holtrop, *Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 453–55.

⁵³ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 617. In his reaction to the condemnation of the Synod of Charenton, Placaesus responded:

Potest enim animo concipi duplex imputatio. *Immediata & Mediata*. . . . Immediatam voco eam, quam solam Thesibus, quas tu refutandas tibi sumpstisti, negare volui; qua putatur *actio illa Adami*, hoc est, vetiti fructus Manducatio ejus posteris omnibus (Christo excepto) proxime, immediate, hoc ipso quod filii sunt *Adami*, imputari ad duas istas *pænas* proprie dictas, privationem justitiæ Originalis quam mortem spiritualem appellas, & mortem æternam. Hanc solam imputationem Actionis illius ego negavi. . . . Mediatam seu consequentem appello eam, quæ hæreditariæ corruptionis in nos ab *Adamo* derivatæ intuitum consequitur, eaque mediante fit. Hujus enim corruptionis participatione communicamus peccato *Adami*, eique, ut ita loquar, habitualiter consentimus, ac propterea digni sumus, qui *Adamo* peccatori annumeremur. (*Opera omnia*, vol. 1 [Franeker, The Netherlands, 1699], p. 280)

Cf. Murray, *Imputation*, pp. 43–44, n. 58.

especially opposes what he considers Placaëus's nonimputation of Adam's sin, a theory that he distills from the *Theses theologice*. Repeatedly, Baxter voices his disagreement with the "learned and judicious Placaëus."⁵⁴

One of Placaëus's arguments mentioned by Baxter is that if Adam's sin is imputed, then "all the sins which *Adam* committed while we were in his loins, must be imputed to us." Moreover, adds Placaëus, "so should all the sins of our intermediate Parents, seeing when they committed them, we were as much in them as in *Adam*."⁵⁵ Baxter grants this consequence. The sins of nearer parents are imputed in the same way as Adam's sin. In accepting this consequence of his realist position, Baxter goes beyond the Augustinianism of others who, while maintaining that later generations partook of Adam's actual sin, do not accept the thesis that original sin consists also of the sins of later generations.⁵⁶

Seminal Presence

Baxter of course needs to defend his realist conception against the charge that someone cannot be held responsible for a sin that he has not actually committed in person. Indeed, Baxter admits that "the sin of *Adam*, or any Parent, is not so fully our own as that is which we personally commit; seeing as we were but seminally, causally, and potentially in our Parents, and not by existence personally. . . ."⁵⁷ Baxter develops this distinction between personal and seminal sinning as follows:

§. 2. We were not in *Adam* distinct Persons really; for our Persons then existed not; and therefore did not inexist.

⁵⁴ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 213 (emphasis throughout in original). Baxter also rejects Placaëus's distinction between mediate and immediate imputation of Adam's sin (*Of Imputation*, p. 34).

John England (fl. 1701–1715), a minister from Sherborne, Dorsetshire, was entirely incorrect in accusing Baxter of being "of the same opinion with the *Salmurian Professors*" in his "disputing against the *Imputation of Adam's Sin*" (John England, *Man's Sinfulness* [London, 1700], p. 383). Baxter's name was cleared by Samuel Clifford, who rightly draws attention to Baxter's disagreement with Placaëus (Samuel Clifford, *Account* [London, 1701], pp. 6–9). England then responded with *A reply to Mr. Samuel Clifford* (1702).

⁵⁵ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 216 (emphasis inverted). Cf. Placaëus, in Cappel et al., *Theses theologice*, p. 206.

⁵⁶ Strong mentions the objection to the Augustinian position that "if we be responsible for Adam's first sin, we must also be responsible not only for every other sin of Adam, but for the sins of our immediate ancestors." He replies that the subsequent sins of Adam and of our immediate ancestors do not determine or change the nature, but "only show what the nature is." Quoting Augustine, *Encheiridion* 46–47 — the same instance to which Baxter appealed — Strong admits that Augustine "leans toward an imputing of the sins of immediate ancestors," but maintains that Augustine limited it to the third and fourth generation (*Systematic Theology*, p. 630).

⁵⁷ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 149.

§. 3. God doth not repute us to have been what we were not; for he judgeth truly, and is not mistaken: Therefore he judged not *Peter* and *John* to have been those Persons in *Adam* then, nor *Adam's* person the same with theirs.

§. 4. Therefore we were not then when he sinned persons guilty in *Adam*; for *Non existentis non sunt accidentia*.

§. 5. We were *Seminally* or *Virtually* in *Adam* when he sinned: Which is but that he had that *Virtus generativa* from which we naturally sprang in time; But to be *Virtually* in him, is *Not to be personally in him*, but *Potentially*, it being as to *Existence terminus diminuens*.

§. 6. As soon as we *were Persons*, we were *Persons derived by Generation* from *Adam*: Therefore with our Persons we derived *Guilt and Pravity*: For he could beget no better than himself.

§. 7. When *Adam* sinned his *Whole Person* was guilty and no part innocent: Therefore his very *Semen prolificum* had its part in the guilt according to its Capacity; And though it was not a *guilty Person*, it was a part of a guilty Person; and a part that was the *Semen personæ*; so that when that *Semen* became a *person* (*Cain*) it became a *guilty person*, the guilt following the subject according to its Capacity: And so downward by Propagation to this day.⁵⁸

This quotation gives in a compact form much of the essence of Baxter's view on the imputation of Adam's sin. He admits that there is no personal involvement of Adam's posterity in his sin. Baxter's realism comes to the fore when he insists on a seminal, rather than a personal presence in Adam. This explains his oft-repeated claim that the whole person of Adam was involved in the sin that was propagated to his posterity.⁵⁹ Body and soul were both involved in Adam's sin.⁶⁰

The Origin of the Soul

Baxter opts for a realist, rather than a federalist position on original sin. This explains his predilection for traducianism as opposed to creationism: The soul originates by true generation rather than by a separate creative act of God.⁶¹ This means that the soul partakes of the moral good or evil as it is derived from the parents.⁶² Again, Baxter aims to avoid conceptualizing God as the author of sin. The universal concurrence or causality of God does, of course,

⁵⁸ Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, pp. 94–95 (incorrect pagination, sigs. G7^v–G8^r).

⁵⁹ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, pp. 104, 220.

⁶⁰ Baxter, *Catholic Theologie*, II.111; *Methodus Theologie*, I.xv.370.

⁶¹ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, pp. 104–14, 168–69.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

cause the soul's existence. But it only causes the soul as such, not the soul as corrupted.⁶³ God is "the specifying cause by creating the procreating force in man, yea and by his constant creative emanation, yet he created not the vice, and *go.* is not the cause of that."⁶⁴ Baxter touches here on the relationship between "God's influx into, and concourse with second causes."⁶⁵ He states that despite the fact that the origin of the soul is *ex traduce*, "God doth as much in it, as if man did nothing: and is as fully the cause as if it were by a *meer creation*, and man were no cause. . . ."⁶⁶ God's universal concourse or causality does, therefore, not make him the author of sin. It is not traducianism, but creationism that runs the danger of making God the author of sin: "That God by way of *penalty* should *create* the soul *sinful immediately*, seems plainly to make him the Author of sin. . . ."⁶⁷

In translating part of his *Two Disputations* (1675) in 1681, Baxter deletes the section dealing with the origin of the soul. He briefly deals with this question at a different place in his *Methodus Theologiae*. He then states, "Briefly, I myself say that the soul originates by way of traduction and is also created. . . ."⁶⁸ Similarly, in his *End of Doctrinal Controversies* (1691), Baxter comments that "*Generative Traduction of Souls*, and yet *God's present*, yea, *immediate Causation* of their *Essence* (which may be called *Creation*) are here Consistent. . . ."⁶⁹ These comments are probably the reason why it is sometimes assumed that Baxter combined traducianism with creationism.⁷⁰ This is an erroneous impression, however. The comment in *End of Doctrinal Controversies* is carefully worded; the immediate causation of the soul "may be called" creation. Careful reading of Baxter's comments in his *Methodus Theologiae* reveals that the traducianism in *Two Disputations* is not abandoned in favor of creationism. Baxter does declare that *creatio* and *generatio* are inseparable. But this does not mean that he now veers in a creationist direction. When he mentions God's creation of the soul, Baxter speaks of God as *causa omnium rerum universalis*. There is a "continuous emanation," which is like a *continua creatio*. Says Baxter,

⁶³ Ibid., p. 109.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 110.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 106-7.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 169.

⁶⁸ "Breviter ipse dico Animam esse simul ex *Traduce* & *Creatam* . . ." (Baxter, *Methodus Theologiae*, I.xv.371).

⁶⁹ Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 87 (incorrect pagination, sig. H2r).

⁷⁰ Fisher, "Theology of Richard Baxter," p. 146; Packer, "Redemption and Restoration," p. 153, n. 2 (but cf. p. 155, which speaks of Baxter's "traducianism"). Cf. Fisher, "Richard Baxter's 'End of Controversy,'" p. 364.

By a law which was to last until the end of the world, God the Creator determined at the beginning that he, as the universal cause of all things — also in order to propagate the species by continuous emanation, which is, as it were, a continuous creation — would always furnish a metaphysical substance or matter, which would propagate the species in new individual souls through the seminal and generative power (which he gave to every single living being, and to whom he also offers the necessary concurrence). So that the entire substance would be from God (but from God as by way of nature, through the law of creation, at the beginning). The specification, however, and the individualization is from God and the parents, by way of generation.⁷¹

Neither Baxter's comment about God's "continuous emanation," nor his reference to God's "requisite universal influx" are new. Both already surface in his *Two Disputations*.⁷² The only differences are that Baxter is now less hesitant to refer to this continuous emanation as "creation" in connection with the origin of the soul, and that he refines his comments on the relationship between God's role and the role of the parents: God provides metaphysical substance or matter, which, in turn, propagates the individual species through the seminal or generative power of the parents. Baxter clearly remains within the traducianist framework. The creation of which he speaks is no more than the universal influx or concurrence that he also acknowledges in his *Two Disputations*. Since Baxter opposes the creationist view in this earlier treatise, the conclusion is justified that Baxter remains within a traducianist framework.

When Baxter bases original sin on seminal presence in Adam and in one's nearer parents, he realizes that he lays himself open to a significant objection: "Our Parents, if faithful, are pardoned and justified, and therefore cannot convey to us the guilt of any sin, because they have it not themselves."⁷³ Baxter replies by saying that only the obligation to punishment (*reatus poenae*) is taken away in justification. The justified person remains guilty of the fact (*reatus facti*) as well as of the fault (*reatus culpa*): "It remaineth true to all eternity, that such a *man did commit such a sin*, and that that *sin deserved death*:"

⁷¹ "Lege, ad finem mundi duraturâ, Deus Creator primo statuit, se ut Causam omnium rerum Universalem, etiam ad species propagandas emanatione continuâ, quæ est quasi continua creatio, substantiam seu materiam metaphysicam semper præbiturum, quæ per virtutem seminalem & generativam (quam dedit unicuique viventium, & cui etiam concursus necessarium præbet,) speciem in animis novis individuâ propagaret. Ita ut substantia tota sit à Deo, (at à Deo ut Naturæ, per Creationis Legem, Principio;) Specificatio autem & Individuatio à Deo & Parentibus, per viam Generationis" (Baxter, *Methodus Theologicæ*, I.xv.371).

⁷² Baxter, *Two Disputations*, pp. 109–10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 182 (emphasis throughout original); cf. p. 231.

(but not that he is *obliged to death for it*.)”⁷⁴ By a voluntary act God pardons the sin of the infant. This pardon does not, however, prevent that “the meer *reatus facti vel culpæ*” is transmitted to the child.⁷⁵ Thus, Baxter salvages his concept of original sin by limiting remission to the obligation to punishment.

REPUTATIVE VOLUNTARINESS

Seminal Presence as well as Reputative Voluntariness

Seminal presence in Adam is the main line of thought in Baxter’s doctrine of original sin. As such, he takes a realist position, although he modifies his Augustinianism with a unique emphasis on the guilt contracted in the remaining sins of Adam and in the sins of the nearer parents.

Baxter’s *Two Disputations* contain another line of argument, however, which causes a considerable amount of tension in his theory of original sin. A common objection to the realist position on imputation is that original corruption is not voluntary. It can, therefore, not be understood as sin. Baxter replies that there are three kinds of voluntary involvement: actual, habitual, and reputative. Original sin is voluntary in the latter two senses.⁷⁶ The pravity of the will is habitual. Thus, “habitual voluntariness” is involved in original sin.⁷⁷ This pravity of the will, however, is only the secondary part of original sin. It does not yet explain the voluntary character of original sin in Adam. Baxter is sensitive to this objection because he regards the will as “the first defiled faculty.”⁷⁸ The other faculties are only capable of sin “by participation from the will.”⁷⁹ To defend the voluntary character of original sin, Baxter therefore takes recourse to a “moral, that is, a *reputative* voluntariness.”⁸⁰ Baxter’s concept of reputative voluntariness is highly significant — it reveals his reliance on natural theology, and, what is more, is indicative of a significant tension in his theory of original sin.

Baxter explains reputative voluntariness as follows: First, he states that it is possible to engage oneself by contract to consent to what another does. Also, if someone wills the cause of a necessary effect, he can be said to will the effect reputatively. Further, if someone is by consent a member of a society, he can

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 231–32. For the distinction between *reatus facti*, *reatus culpæ*, and *reatus poenæ*, see pp. 113–14. Cf. Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 236–39.

⁷⁵ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 231.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 79, 133.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 133–34.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

be said to be an offender reputatively when the society offends. From these general principles, Baxter then comes to the relation between parents and children:

In case of a *natural power* that another hath to choose or refuse for us: and this is the case of *Parents* and their *infants*, and *ideot children*, that having no capacity themselves to choose or refuse, their Parents wills are reputatively their wills, in all cases wherein their Parents have power to dispose of them; as it is in cases of inheritance among us. So in Baptism the Parents have power to engage the child to Christ, as all the Jews had power (and were bound) to engage their children in covenant to God: where the child reputatively consenteth.⁸¹

This is a most remarkable statement. There is no word about seminal presence in Adam nor about guilt contracted by being in Adam's — or our nearer parents' — loins. Instead, Baxter now speaks of a "natural power" to choose on behalf of someone else. It is a "reputative" or "moral" willing.

This is a far cry from the realist position that Baxter defends elsewhere. Throughout the first disputation, Baxter uses reputative voluntariness in defense of original sin. Only on a few occasions is there something reminiscent of the realist position defended elsewhere.⁸² The second disputation uses both seminal and reputative interest in the sin of Adam and of nearer parents; Baxter does speak of seminal, causal, or potential being which we have in our parents.⁸³ He then goes on to speak, however, of individual persons "as parts of the society."⁸⁴ In this latter sense, "a *Child*, a *Subject*, a *Church-member* may suffer for the sins of the Heads or Body of the Society."⁸⁵

Baxter is aware that he combines two rather different notions of original sin. He explicitly combines the two when he says, "It is both these sorts of guilt which adhere to us in our *infancy* from our *Parents* sins. 1. The guilt which followeth our *natural interest*, as we are *seminally* in them, adhereth to us all, as soon as we have our being. 2. The other is varied according to the several *societies* that we are members of."⁸⁶ With regard to these societies, Bax-

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 79–80.

⁸² Ibid., p. 75, as well as his discussion on the origin of the soul (pp. 104–14). Baxter also speaks of "participation and imputation of that one mans offence" (p. 85), and of "some participation" in Adam's sin (p. 87). Cf. in the second disputation the remark that there is "real participation" in Adam's sin (p. 187).

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 145–46, 149, 151.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 152.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 153; cf. p. 156: "[T]he guilt of that *common sin*, is *participative personally ours*, as we communicate in it by being *members* of the society: as the hand is guilty of the sin of the tongue, because it is a member of the body that is guilty."

⁸⁶ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 158. The same distinction is mentioned repeatedly throughout the second disputation (pp. 177–78, 194, 219).

ter then distinguishes "the great Common-wealth of the World," families and parents, nations and their subordinate societies, and churches. Through membership in any of these societies, an individual may contract guilt because of the sins of other members.⁸⁷ Baxter bases this reputative guilt on God "making his covenant as the Rector of all *mankind*."⁸⁸

A corollary of this position is that original sin is not just based on Scripture, but also on natural law. A sovereign does not put his subjects to death when they do not deserve it. So, also, God does not condemn infants when they do not deserve it. This is clear from "the Law of Nature and Scripture."⁸⁹ Indeed, "all Common-wealths are directed by the light of nature, to punish infants for their Parents sins, as naturally participant."⁹⁰

Salmurian Background

What is the source of Baxter's idea of reputative voluntariness? Most likely, Baxter derived it from the father of the teachings of Saumur, John Cameron. Thomas Blake expresses his suspicion that Baxter was influenced on this point by Amyraut: "I believe Mr. *Baxter* chiefly took up this opinion of justification of infants, *tanquam Apendices parentum*, for *Amiraldus* his sake, who had it from *Camero*, and was his follower (as aged and reverend *Molineus* saith) in nothing but his blemishes."⁹¹ Blake does not give his reasons for suspecting Baxter of Amyraldianism on this point. His comment is corroborated, however, by a quotation from Cameron that Baxter appended to his section on the antiquity of infant baptism in his *Plain Scripture Proof*.⁹² Cameron appeals to Aristotle, who argues that children should be reckoned as citizens (*reputari Cives*) because they are appendages of their parents (*appendices parentum*). In the same way, argues Cameron, children are added to their faithful parents,

and must be judged in covenant, because they are born among covenant people from covenant people; and therefore they must be regarded as covenant people as long as they themselves do not, through unbelief, abandon the covenant and reject the grace of Christ which is the foundation of the covenant, which they can only do as adults. Therefore, if they die before they have arrived at an age at which they

⁸⁷ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, pp. 158–60.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135; cf. pp. 154, 178, 199–200.

⁹¹ Blake, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 454.

⁹² Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 161.

are able to distinguish good from evil, they must in the same way be regarded by God as if they believed, and therefore must be saved.⁹³

This appeal to Cameron fully bears out Blake's idea that Baxter was influenced by the school of Saumur on the point of justification of infants. There are several elements that recur in Baxter: (1) the reliance on natural law, with the comparison to the citizenship of infants in political states; (2) the requirement of faith for inclusion in the covenant⁹⁴; and, most remarkably; (3) the identical manner in which the child's inclusion in the parents is expressed — whereas Cameron speaks of *reputari Cives*, Baxter says that infants have covenanted "reputatively" in their parents,⁹⁵ and that they are guilty of the sins of Adam and their nearer parents by reputation. While some caution must be exercised, the school of Saumur is certainly a likely source of Baxter's thoughts on this matter.

It is, therefore, not easy to classify Baxter's relation to Salmurian theology on original sin. On the one hand, he opposes the Salmurian notion that original sin consists of no more than moral pravity. He wants to retain the "real participation" in the sin of Adam and our nearer parents. On the other hand, when attempting to define the voluntary character of original sin, Baxter makes use of Cameron's notion that the action of the parents may be reputed as ours. Baxter's relationship to Saumur on the point of original sin is indicative of his general theological methodology, which is extremely eclectic. Baxter appears to adopt from Saumur those elements that he considers useful for his own theology; he rejects other elements. It is clear that if Baxter can be classified as "Amyraldian," this can only be done with some qualification.

The Function of Reputative Voluntariness

The significant place of reputative voluntariness indicates that it is by no means negligible. To be sure, it is only secondary, "upon a supposition of the former [i.e., seminal presence in Adam], or else it is none at all."⁹⁶ But Baxter needs the concept of reputative voluntariness for at least two reasons. The

⁹³ "ac in foedere censeri, quia nascuntur inter foederatos ex foederatis; ac proinde tamdiu haberi pro foederatis, quamdiu ipsimet foedus non deferunt, & gratiam Christi quae est foederis fundamentum per incredulitatem non rejiciunt, quod nisi adulti facere non possunt. Itaque si moriantur antequam ad aetatem pervenerint in qua possunt bonum a malo discernere, eodem loco à Deo haberi acsi credidissent, proindeque salvari" (quoted by Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 161; emphasis throughout original).

⁹⁴ For Baxter's view that justifying faith is the requirement for admission to the sacraments, see above, pp. 15–21.

⁹⁵ Baxter, *More Proofs*, pp. 171, 287.

⁹⁶ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 177.

first is that it is a way to deflect the charge that his realist position makes no sense because original sin is not voluntary. As noted, Baxter takes refuge in a "habitual voluntariness." But habitual corruption only means pravity. As such, it does not indicate that Adam's posterity willed the actual sin of Adam. Therefore, Baxter makes use of "reputative voluntariness": Adam's descendants may rightly be said to will Adam's actual sin, even if this is true only in a moral or reputative sense.

Baxter also needs a reputative voluntariness to defend infant baptism.⁹⁷ Since justifying faith is required for admission to baptism, Baxter is faced with a problem: Children do not have this faith. Consequently, Baxter argues that children of believers are to be baptized because "their Parents wills are reputatively their wills. . . ."⁹⁸ This point is, of course, closely related to the preceding one. The will of infants is at stake. Their mere seminal presence in the parents does not mean that they will the actual moral good or evil of their parents. They must, therefore, be reputed to will their parents' faith.

By taking recourse to reputative voluntariness, Baxter introduces a concept that is at odds with his emphasis on seminal presence in Adam as well as in our nearer parents. It is clear that Baxter is unable to deflect the criticism against his Augustinian position. This is the reason he looks for an additional support base for original sin. In doing so, he comes close to the federalist position that he rejects rather vehemently for its arbitrariness. The feature that distinguishes his concept of reputative voluntariness from the federalist position is that he gives reputative voluntariness only a secondary place, based on the seminal presence in one's ancestors.⁹⁹ This takes the angle out of the federalist position: God does not deal arbitrarily in imputing Adam's sin to his progeny. God only reputes Adam's posterity to have willed Adam's sin on the basis of the seminal bond between Adam and his descendants. The ultimate basis remains the seminal bond between Adam and his posterity.

⁹⁷ Cf. below, pp. 58–63.

⁹⁸ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, p. 80. Baxter repeatedly makes a connection between original sin and baptism (ibid, pp. 34, 78, 91, 96–97, 112; *Catholick Theologie*, II.105; *Divine Life*, in *Works*, 3:795 [13:106]).

⁹⁹ Baxter, *Two Disputations*, pp. 177, 195–96.

IV

Infant Baptism

SIGNIFICANCE AND DIFFICULTY

Infant Baptism an Insignificant Issue

It is only with some difficulty that John Tombes, the antipaedobaptist preacher of Bewdley, finally manages to get Baxter involved in the issue of infant baptism. Baxter can justifiably say, "I never *meddled at first with Mr. Tombes*, till he unavoidably constrained me. . . ."¹ This restraint is remarkable, considering the zeal with which Baxter devotes himself to other controversies. Baxter's motive for avoiding the question of infant baptism is simple: It is a non-essential issue. One of Baxter's main objections to Tombes is that he "doth take this for a fundamental point, which the salvation or damnation of men doth necessarily depend on. . . ."² Baxter is convinced that there are but few *articuli fundamentales*³; baptism is not one of them. Consequently, he insists,

¹ Baxter, *Review*, p. 1.

² Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 10.

³ Baxter maintains that the church should have three confessions: (1) those containing only fundamentals—such as the Apostles' Creed (to be imposed on all people); (2) those evident in Scripture that contain all points next to the foundation, and of necessity to maintain the fundamentals (to be imposed on all ministers); and (3) less important, controversial issues, fit to be debated (as a general synodical rule, but not to be imposed by subscription to anyone (*ibid.*, p. 121). Baxter's views on *articuli fundamentales*, springing from a sincere desire for unity, is a topic deserving further investigation. Throughout his works, Baxter refers to the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Decalogue as the only fundamentals (*RB*, III.63, 65; *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 10). Cf. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A Study in Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 6–10; Roger Thomas, "The Break-Up of Nonconformity," in *The Beginnings of Nonconformity*, ed. Geoffrey F. Nuttall et al., The Hibbert Lectures (London: Clarke, 1964), pp. 51–52; Peter Toon, ed., *The Correspondence of John Owen (1616–1683): With an Account of His Life and Work*, with a preface by Geoffrey F. Nuttall (Cambridge, U.K.: Clarke, 1970), pp. 139–40. For a discussion of the issue of fundamental articles in Reformed scholasticism, see Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1987), pp. 277–311.

I dare say, that ordinarily if you lay out but the hundreth part of your time, your study, your talk, or your zeal upon this question either for or against it, that you will never be able to justify it; perhaps if I said the thousand part. For as there are a multitude of other truths and duties to be first learned, so some one of those may be of a hundred times more moment, and may require a hundred times more of your time, and study, and zeal.⁴

One of the corollaries of Baxter's minimization of the issue is his willingness to have church communion with antipaedobaptists. On two occasions he lays out terms of communion with the opponents of infant baptism. The first occasion is in 1659, when two pastors of separatist antipaedobaptist churches, Thomas Lambe (d. 1686) and William Allen, renounce their opposition to infant baptism.⁵ This leads to a meeting with "the most moderate Pastors of the Rebaptized Churches: And they desired my Proposals or Terms on which we might hold Peace and Communion with them."⁶ Baxter issues a similar proposal in 1675, in his *More Proofs of Infants Church-membership*.⁷ Even in his last treatise on the issue, Baxter still pleads "for *Love and peaceable Communion* upon terms of mutual forbearance."⁸

There is no question that Baxter is willing to maintain communion with antipaedobaptists. Not only is infant baptism a nonfundamental article, but also the difficulty of the issue demands that diversity of opinion be tolerated. Infant baptism can be proven by Scripture, but, insists Baxter, "my judgement was and is, that the point of Infant Baptism hath its considerable difficulties, which may occasion wise and good men to doubt, or to be mistaken in it."⁹

Infant Baptism Related to Fundamental Articles

Considering Baxter's irenic position, one might well wonder how he ever came to be styled "the great *Maule* of the *Anabaptists*."¹⁰ In 1649, Baxter is

⁴ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 12. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 408; *RB*, II.187.

⁵ For Baxter's correspondence with Lambe and Allen, see *RB*, II.180–87, appendix III.51–66, appendix IV.67–107. Cf. *CCRB*, 473, 483, 491, 495, 503, 514, 519, 528, 540, 543–44, 561, 567, 576, 584–85, 589, 601, 607, 609, 615, 624, 631, 841, 880, 882, 884, 887, 952, 996, 1000; Powicke, "Richard Baxter's Relation to the Baptists," pp. 199–215; *idem*, *Life*, pp. 150–52.

For Thomas Lambe, see *DNB*, 32:3–5; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Thomas Lambe, William Allen and Richard Baxter: An Additional Note," *BQ* 27 (1977): 139–40; *BDBRSC*, 2:166–67; *CCRB*, 473.

⁶ *RB*, II.181. The actual proposal for communion is given in *RB*, II.186–87.

⁷ Baxter, *More Proofs*, pp. 228–31.

⁸ Baxter, *Review*, p. 5.

⁹ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 219. Cf. *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 9, 11

¹⁰ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, sig. A4^v.

dragged into the debate on infant baptism as an unwilling participant. This does not mean, however, that he regards it as an isolated problem with little impact on other theological questions. He prefaces his 1657 proposal with the comment, "Those that are so moderate as to take Infants for Church Members, though not to be Baptized, let them openly make profession of it."¹¹ In the 1675 proposal, he expects the antipaedobaptists to consent "that God hath made many promises to the seed of the faithful above others."¹² They must "solemnly profess, that we thankfully desire all those mercies for this child which God hath promised to such in his word. . . ."¹³ Baxter refuses to downplay the issue for the sake of unity; the reason is that infant baptism is closely related to other theological issues.

Accordingly, Baxter refers to dangerous views that lie at the basis of much of the opposition to infant baptism:

Though the point of Infant-Baptism be comparatively of less moment than many judge; Yet the grounds on which it standeth, and which usually are denied by those that deny it, are of very great moment; And therefore though the bare denying of water to Infants be no great or dangerous Error in it self considered: yet as it consisteth of all its parts, it is very great.¹⁴

There are dangerous errors behind the antipaedobaptist position. Baxter lists a large number of them. They overlap each other and relate almost invariably to the doctrine of the church and the covenant. The final one that Baxter mentions summarizes what he considers to be the foundation of the antipaedobaptist stand:

Lastly, they do plainly play the Devils part in accusing their own Children, and disputing them out of the Church and House of God, and out of his Promises and Covenant [*sic*], and the privileges that accompany them; and most ungratefully deny, reject and plead against the mercies that Christ hath purchased for their Children, and made over to them.¹⁵

The main issue, for Baxter, is the denial of infants' church membership and their part in the covenant of God. Baxter has no problem with those who "think with *Tertullian* and *Nazianzene*" that baptism should be delayed. More important, however, is that "they confess *Infants relation to God, his Covenant*

¹¹ *RB*, II.183.

¹² Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 229.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

and Church.”¹⁶ But even this is not an absolute condition for communion. After mentioning the children’s part in the covenant of grace and their church membership as the only issues that he would want the antipaedobaptists to yield, Baxter comments, “Yea, if the Anabaptists would but say, (*I Dedicate this Child to God, as far as he hath given me power, and heartily desire that God may be his Father, Christ his Saviour; and the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier:*.)”¹⁷

Visible church membership of infants is a significant issue for Baxter. Another point that he brings forward repeatedly is the question of separation. Baxter loathes the “spirit of *separation*” that he encounters among some Baptists.¹⁸ The main motifs in Baxter’s controversies on infant baptism are, therefore, the doctrine of the church and the covenant, as well as his zeal for the unity of the church.

VISIBLE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Baptism and Covenant: Two Problems

Baxter and Tombes agree that the main issue underlying the controversy over infant baptism is the doctrine of the covenant. When Tombes writes that God only seals when baptism is administrated to a believer, Baxter comments, “I Conceive these dangerous Errors of *Mr. T.* about the nature of the Covenant and Seals in generall, which I shall touch in this and the next, are the root of his error about Baptism, or at least much strengthen it.”¹⁹ In reaction, Tombes insists that Baxter errs in “making the New Covenant common to elect and reprobates, in making reprobates interest in the Covenant a fruit of Christs death, denying the absolute promise to be most fitly called the Covenant of Grace. . . .”²⁰ The issues that are raised in the debate extend beyond the question of infant baptism. Thus, Samuel Fisher justifies his examination of Baxter’s views on infant baptism as follows:

¹⁶ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 210. Elsewhere, Baxter lists two groups of Baptists with whom he is willing to have communion: “First, those that deny not the Covenant-Rights, and Church-Relation of the Infants of Believers, confessing them to be *Holy*. . . . Secondly, those that being in *doubt only* of the Sufficiency or Lawfulness of Infant-Baptism, do receive a second or a third Administration . . . (*Review*, sig. A2^v, emphasis inverted). Cf. *Review*, pp. 11, 27.

¹⁷ Baxter, *Review*, p. 4. The actual proposals for communion of 1657 and 1675 do not mention the children’s part in the covenant or their church membership as something that would have to be agreed upon.

¹⁸ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 221. Says Baxter, “As I am far more offended at their *Schism*, or *separation* from Communion with our Churches, than at their *opinion*, so I will here lay down those terms on which I am perswaded good and sober men will be willing on both sides to agree and hold communion . . .” (*More Proofs*, p. 228).

¹⁹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 222. Cf. Tombes, *Apology*, pp. 152–53.

²⁰ Tombes, *Precursor*, p. 84.

But finding this to be that which of all things most gravels Mr. *Baxter* and makes him stick so stiffly to his plea for the baptism, and Church-membership of infants, because unless that be owned he can find no good ground in all the word whereupon to hope or believe that any dying infant in all the world can be saved . . . I shall enter on an examination. . . .²¹

Fisher rightly perceives that for Baxter the hope of the salvation of believers' infants is at stake. Baptism as the seal of an absolute covenant undermines this hope: No one is in a position to know with which child God has made an absolute covenant, which child is elect. Baxter's opposition to the antipaedobaptist view is motivated by a concern for the children's rightful place in church and covenant, and, consequently, by a concern for their standing before God.

Tombes mentions several arguments that paedobaptists adduce in defense of infant baptism:

to wit, an imagined Covenant of grace to a Believer and his seed natural, the nature of Sacraments to be seals of the Covenant of grace, the inference of duties about positive rites of the new Testament from analogy with abrogated Ceremonies of the old, the command of Circumcision to have been in the extent of it commensurate to and derived from the Covenant with *Abraham Gen. 17.* as the adequate reason, the succession of Baptism into the room and use of Circumcision. . . .²²

Tombes's assessment indicates that not only the nature of the covenant as absolute or conditional, but also the relationship between the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant as it functions in the New Testament period is at stake. Moreover, the question is raised whether the natural seed of believers always has a stake in the covenant.

Of course, these issues are not unrelated. They all are at the heart of federal theology, and, indeed, concern Baxter's doctrine of grace. Tombes's grasp of the issues is beyond doubt. This is evident in his focus on what he regards as two problems in Baxter's thinking. Both problems are related to Baxter's federal scheme. The first difficulty that Tombes discerns in Baxter's position relates to the latter's defense of infants' visible church membership. Baxter has made this the cornerstone of his defense of infant baptism. Since children were members of the church before Christ's coming, they remain church members today, unless it can be proven that their right to church membership has been repealed. Thus, as McSwain states, Baxter attempts "to pull

²¹ Fisher, *Baptism Before*, pp. 442–43.

²² Tombes, *Anti-Paedobaptism*, III, sigs. a4^{r-v}.

cleverly the polemical rug from under antipaedobaptist feet on the matter of positive proof."²³ Tombes, however, is not lacking in acuity. His correspondence of 1655 witnesses an attempt to turn the tables and return the burden of proof to Baxter. In his first letter, Tombes writes,

Not finding yet that Law or Ordinance of infants visible Churchmembership which you assert in your book of *Baptism* to be unrepealed, I do request you to set down the particular Text or Texts of Holy Scripture where you conceive that Law or Ordinance is written. . . .²⁴

Throughout the correspondence of 1655 Tombes demands that Baxter give proof of the existence of an ordinance of infants' visible church membership. Tombes considers Baxter's response unconvincing. Baxter, he says, "never shewed me a Law of infants admission. . . ." ²⁵ Tombes is convinced, therefore, that Baxter's defense of infant baptism flounders on his inability to prove the existence of a law or ordinance that makes children visible church members. Since such a law cannot be proven to exist, Tombes concludes that he is under no obligation to prove that it has been repealed.

The second weakness that Tombes detects in Baxter's position lies in the latter's insistence that justifying faith is a prerequisite for baptism. As noted, Baxter maintains this requirement in opposition to Thomas Blake.²⁶ To Tombes, this means that Baxter yields his cause. Tombes exclaims that he is amazed "at the blindness of Master *Baxter*, if he see not how unanswerably his own words overthrow Infant baptism."²⁷ Tombes is well aware that Baxter will retort that the parents' faith is imputed to the children: "They feign a new Christian faith to themselves, *to wit, a believing immediate by the faith of a Parent or Proparent*; so that before there was but one Christian faith, and now they have made two."²⁸ The strength of Tombes's argument in *Felo de Se* (1659) is twofold: (1) it draws attention to the centrality of Baxter's idea that parents or proparents are able to profess saving faith on behalf of their children and (2) it illustrates the unique position of Baxter among paedobaptists in maintaining that the basis of baptism does not lie exclusively in the promise of God, nor in the (presumed) regeneration of the child, but in the justifying faith of the parents.²⁹

²³ McSwain, "Controversy over Infant Baptism," p. 319.

²⁴ Tombes, *Anti-Paedobaptism*, III, 353.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 298.

²⁶ Cf. above, pp. 15–21.

²⁷ Tombes, *Felo de Se*, p. 29 (emphasis inverted).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33. Cf. *ibid.*, sig. A3r; pp. 24–25, 28–29, 33–45.

²⁹ I do not agree with McSwain when he states that "Baxter's sustained counterattack on anti-paedobaptism offered no surprises or new arguments" ("Controversy over Infant Baptism," p. 318).

Visible and Invisible Church

By putting the finger to some sensitive spots in Baxter's theory of baptism, Tombes proves himself a formidable opponent. Moreover, he gives clear insight into Baxter's theology by forcing him to deal with some of the presuppositions of his position. It is worthwhile, therefore, to analyze the two problem areas in more detail. Baxter makes the difference regarding visible church membership the central argument in his debate with Tombes. He already used the argument in his private discussion with Tombes in 1646 and in his sermons in Coventry, a year later. Now, again, the argument surfaces as the main feature in Baxter's defense of infant baptism: Since infants are visible church members, they ought to be admitted to baptism.

For a correct understanding of the discussion, some insight into the ecclesiological differences between the views of Baxter and Tombes is necessary. Repeatedly, the distinction between the visible and invisible church comes up for discussion. Baxter maintains that the invisible church is church in the primary or real sense of the word. It contains those who are in a state of salvation:

I take it for granted, that to be a visible member of the Church, and to be a member of the visible Church, is all one. He that denieth that, will shew but his vanity; And that the invisible Church, or the sincere part is most properly & primarily called the Church and the body of Christ; and the Church as visible, containing also the unsincere part, is called the Church, secondarily, and for the sake of the invisible, and so it is called the body; because men seem to be of the invisible Church, therefore they truly are of the visible. . . .³⁰

The visible church is only called church in a secondary, derived sense. The visible church is called church in the sense that it is *ecclesia coniecturalis*. This means that "the Church is not divided into two sorts, but it is a twofold respect of one and the same Church; one as to the internall Essence, the other as to the externall manner of existing, as *Ames*. speaks."³¹ The visible church as such is not to be confused with particular visible churches, however. The visible church, maintains Baxter, is universal: "You must understand, that to be a member of the visible Church, is not to be a member of any particular or Politicall Body or Society, as *Rome* would have it. . . . Therefore a man living alone in *America*, may yet be a Member of the visible Church; for he hath

³⁰ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 73; cf. pp. 384–86.

³¹ *Ibid.*; cf. p. 44: "The Truth is, it is the same Church in severall respects, that usually is called visible or invisible. It is specially for the sake of true believers, that all seeming Believers are called the Church. . . ."

that which constituteth him a visible Member, though there be none to discern it."³²

Tombes does not deny the distinction between visible and invisible church. He does, however, take issue with Baxter's notion that one must be a member of the visible church before it is possible to belong to the invisible church.³³ Tombes insists that children may belong to the invisible church, even though they are not visible church members: "I have often said they [i.e., children of believers] may be both Disciples and Christians invisibly, and so have salvation. . . ."³⁴

Whereas Tombes emphasizes election and is willing to separate the visible and the invisible church, Baxter maintains that election is not the basis for baptism and that one cannot divorce election and the invisibility of the church from its visible aspect. This difference leads to an extended exegetical disagreement. Baxter argues from Rom. 11:17 — "And if some of the branches be broken off" — that not all, but only some were broken off from the church, and that therefore the gift of church membership was not revoked to the rest.³⁵ Tombes rejects this argument:

For he [i.e., Baxter] conceives *the some that were broken off* were the unbelieving Iews, and that they were broken off from the visible Iewish Church, as he saith after. But that is palpably false: For they continued in the visible Iewish Church, and the believing Iews were broken off from that Church, and the Gentiles were not to be grafted into the visible Church of the Iews, but were to be broken off from them.³⁶

Tombes does not accept that the unbelieving Jews were broken off from the visible church; Rom. 11 does not speak of the visible, but of the invisible church: "The Church from which they were broken off, was the invisible Church of true believers of which *Abraham* was the root by exemplary believing. . . ."³⁷ Tombes does not agree that the unbelieving Jews were natural branches, the main body of the Jewish nation, and that Paul is, therefore, speaking of the visible church.³⁸ Breaking off does not just mean exclusion from the visible church, insists Tombes, but is "the execution of the decree of reprobation in

³² Ibid., pp. 73–74.

³³ Baxter insists that "the visible is far larger than the invisible, and contains the invisible in it" (ibid., p. 75).

³⁴ Tombes, *Precursor*, p. 42.

³⁵ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 43.

³⁶ Tombes, *Antipedobaptism*, I, 50.

³⁷ Ibid., 51.

³⁸ Cf. Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 45.

excluding them from the invisible Church.”³⁹ The “whole context” speaks of election and reprobation.⁴⁰

The question arises, of course, whether it is possible to be broken off from the invisible church. Although Tombes insists that it is the invisible church from which the unbelievers were broken off, he certainly does not mean to call the perseverance of the saints into question. He explicitly denies this implication: “The meaning is not, that any branch truly in him could be fruitlesse, or taken away; but he calleth that a branch in him which was only so in appearance.”⁴¹

Moreover, Tombes maintains that the covenant with Abraham, the root of the olive, was a “mixed covenant,” with both evangelical and civil promises: “The Covenant takes its denomination from the promises; but the promises are mixt, some Euangelicall, belonging to those to whom the Gospel belongeth, some are Domestique, or Civill promises, specially respecting the House of *Abraham*, and policy of *Israel*. . . .”⁴² The evangelical promises hold forth special blessings to believers by Christ, the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:8, 9, 16; Acts 3:25). The domestic or civil promises relate to Abraham’s offspring, the continuation of the covenant with Isaac, the coming of Christ out of Isaac, the promise of deliverance from Egypt, and the promised land.⁴³

Tombes’s description of the Abrahamic covenant as a “mixed covenant” leads into one of the central questions of the debate: Were only the elect, or were all who were circumcised, in the covenant of grace? Tombes makes a distinction between “natural branches” and “branches by nature”: “The elect Jews were natural branches of the invisible Church as (*natural*) notes onely a qualification of their persons in respect of their descent: and yet not (*by nature*) as the cause of their being branches of the invisible *Church*.”⁴⁴ The elect Jews did not belong to the invisible church simply because of their descent from Abraham. After all, the Abrahamic covenant was a mixed covenant, with mixed promises. The unbelieving Jews, Tombes insists, were never part of the covenant of grace: “It is granted that many thousand Jews were neither naturally, nor by nature branches of the invisible *Church*, and that *Rom.* 9.8. proves it: And this is a good argument for me to prove that the

³⁹ Tombes, *Antipedobaptism*, I, 54.

⁴⁰ Tombes, *Examen*, p. 64. Cf. *Antipedobaptism*, I, 66: The breaking off “was a judicall act of his according to his purpose of reprobation, which brake them off from the invisible Church of Gods Elect, who are a certain body having an existence in all ages. . . .”

⁴¹ Tombes, *Examen*, p. 64.

⁴² Tombes, *Exercitation*, p. 2. Cf. *Examen*, pp. 39–40.

⁴³ Tombes, *Exercitation*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Tombes, *Antipedobaptism*, I, 63.

Covenant of grace was never made to *Abraham* and his naturall seed, though that be the basis of the Pædobaptists tenet for Infant-baptism.⁴⁵

Tombes and Baxter are agreed that under the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenant infants were visible church members. They differ, however, on the basis for this visible church membership. Tombes locates the foundation for this church membership in God's setting aside the nation of Israel: "They were Church-members before both by Gods special separating of the whole nation to be his people, and the solemn Covenant at mount *Horeb*, and so were members of that Church as part of that nation."⁴⁶ Tombes argues that under the national covenant made with Abraham and the people of Israel visible church membership is given with one's national identity. Circumcision is precisely that — the badge of national identity. Circumcision does not always seal the covenant of grace.⁴⁷ Circumcision is only a seal of the righteousness of faith to the believers. Ishmael may have been circumcised, but this does not mean that the evangelical promises were his. Neither was he circumcised on the basis of any other benefits of the Abrahamic covenant. Circumcision as such was only based on God's precept. Tombes insists that "the Text expressly makes the reason of what *Abraham* did to be Gods appointment, [*Gen. 17*] v.23. and no other."⁴⁸ The direct reason for circumcision was only God's command. For the elect, circumcision was also the seal of the righteousness of faith. The reprobates, however, were only "under the outward administration."⁴⁹ They had neither the promise, nor the seal of the covenant of grace.

Baxter rejects this concept of visible church membership and circumcision. Infants were church members prior to the institution of circumcision, insists Baxter. They were not just church members since the time of Abraham. Infants' church membership dates from creation, not from the Abrahamic covenant.⁵⁰ Infants' church membership did not, therefore, disappear along with the rite of circumcision.

Infants' Church Membership and Reputative Consent

In the correspondence of 1655, Tombes urges Baxter to come up with texts that prove that there is a law or ordinance establishing infants' church mem-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁶ Tombes, *Anti-pædobaptism*, II, 237.

⁴⁷ Tombes, *Anti-Pædobaptism*, III, 253 (incorrect pagination, sig. Kk3r); *Examen*, p. 96.

⁴⁸ Tombes, *Examen*, pp. 95–96 (emphasis inverted); cf. p. 98: "[T]hough I deny not circumcised persons were by faith to look on the covenant of Grace through these administrations, yet the reason of being circumcised was barely Gods command; so that if you abstract *God's command*, notwithstanding the covenant, or any other administration of it, they were not to be circumcised. . . ."

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁵⁰ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 66–67.

bership. In his first reply, Baxter states that it is not he who has to prove the existence of such a law but Tombes who must prove that this law is repealed. Is the existence of a law or precept not beyond doubt if, in the Old Testament, infants had the benefit of church membership and if parents had the duty to devote their children to God?⁵¹ But Tombes denies that there was such a law. In his second letter to Baxter, Tombes states,

I confess infants were by Gods fact of taking the whole people of the Jews for his people, in that estate of the Jewish Pædagogy (not by any promise or precept) visible Church members, that is of the Congregation of *Israel*. I do not confess that there was any law or ordinance determining it should be so, but onely a fact of God, which is a transeunt thing, and I think it were a foolish undertaking for mee to prove the repeal of a fact.⁵²

By speaking of a “transeunt fact” Tombes allows Baxter to take the initiative and go on the offensive; the latter now asks Tombes in a brief note “what transient fact you mean, which you conceive without law or promise did make Church-members: that so I may know where the competition lieth.”⁵³ Tombes replies that the transient fact is God’s “taking of the whole people of the Jews for his people.”⁵⁴ It began with the calling of Abraham out of Ur (Gen. 12:1) and continued until the covenant ceremony at Sinai.⁵⁵ Tombes calls this fact of God taking the Jews for his people transient “because done in time, and so not eternal, and past, and so not in congruous sense repealeable as a law, ordinance, statute, decree, which determines such a thing shall bee for the future. . . .”⁵⁶ The Jews were not made visible church members by a promise and a precept of God, but simply by a “transeunt fact.”⁵⁷ Baxter rejects this notion. To him, if the phrase “transeunt fact” means anything, it must be legislation that obliges to duty and a promise that conveys the right to a benefit.⁵⁸

Tombes remains of the opinion that he does not have the task of proving the repeal of a law on infants’ church membership. There never was such a law. The Jews were God’s people by a mere “transeunt fact.” Although disagree-

⁵¹ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 6. Cf. Tombes, *Anti-Pædobaptism*, III, 354.

⁵² Tombes, *Anti-Pædobaptism*, III, 355. Cf. Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 8.

⁵³ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 9 (emphasis throughout in original). Cf. Tombes, *Anti-Pædobaptism*, III, 355.

⁵⁴ Tombes, *Anti-Pædobaptism*, III, 355. Cf. Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 10.

⁵⁵ Tombes, *Anti-Pædobaptism*, III, 355–56. Cf. Baxter, *More Proofs*, pp. 10–11.

⁵⁶ Tombes, *Anti-Pædobaptism*, III, 356. Cf. Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 11.

⁵⁷ Tombes, *Anti-Pædobaptism*, III, 380–81.

⁵⁸ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 58. Cf. Tombes, *Anti-Pædobaptism*, III, 378.

ment continues as to what constituted visible church membership in the Old Testament, Baxter is finally willing to prove that infant church membership outlived the rite of circumcision. This is clear, according to Baxter, from the fact that the law of infants' church membership is not "part of the Ceremonial, or meerly Judiciall Law, nor yet of the Law of Works. . . ." ⁵⁹ In this context, Baxter makes the significant remark that it "is of the very Law of Nature to have Infants to be part of a Kingdom, and the Kings subjects." ⁶⁰ Baxter is, therefore, not keen to comply with Tombes's consistent demand that he show texts from Scripture that give the law or ordinance of infants' church membership. Baxter distinguishes between laws that make a duty and laws that suppose the duty. ⁶¹ He then concludes, "If I could shew you no written law or promise as first constituting the duty, or granting the priviledge of Church-membership, it were not the least disparagement to my cause, as long as I can shew you those following Laws which presuppose this." ⁶² Baxter does, finally, cite a number of texts to prove that a law of infants' church membership does exist. ⁶³ Most of these are meant to prove indirectly that a law of infants' church membership does exist. In the midst of these texts, however, Baxter again provides a section on natural law. ⁶⁴ He argues as follows: "The law of Nature bindeth us to give to every one his own due: But Infants are Gods own due; *Ergo*, the law of Nature bindeth Parents to give them up to God." ⁶⁵ Baxter appeals to the "principle of self-preservation, and desiring our own welfare, and the welfare of our Children," which God has made part of human nature. ⁶⁶

Baxter's appeal to the law of nature is not motivated by a lack of scriptural proof for infant baptism. Still, his use of natural law is basic to his entire argument. It was noted earlier that Tombes (followed by Danvers) insists that Baxter's view logically leads to a renunciation of the paedobaptist position. Baxter accepts the tenet of the opponents of infant baptism that justifying

⁵⁹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 59.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Baxter, *More Proofs*, pp. 72–73.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 73 (emphasis throughout in original).

⁶³ Gen. 1:26–28, 3:15; Gen. 17, Rom. 4:10–14; Gen. 3:20, 4:1, 6:2, 9:9, 26–27, 12:2–3, 22:16–18, 26:3–5; Exod. 12:48, 19:5–6; Deut. 17:1–2, 26:14, 18, 28:4, 9; Ezra 9:2; Deut. 29:19–21, 23, 25–26; 2 Chron. 15; 2 Kings 23:2–2; 2 Chron. 34:31–32; Lev. 25:41, 54–55; Exod. 20:5–6; Deut. 5:9–10; Ps. 102:28, 103:17, 127:3; Joel 2:16; 2 Chron. 20:13; Prov. 20:7; Deut. 4:37, 10:15; Ps. 69:36; Prov. 11:21; Ps. 37:26; Isa. 61:8–9, 62:12, 65:23 (Baxter, *More Proofs*, pp. 77–105, 116–139).

⁶⁴ Baxter, *More Proofs*, pp. 105–16.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 105 (emphasis inverted).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

faith is a requirement for baptism. But infants are not capable of justifying faith. Therefore, concludes Tombes, infants must not be baptized. There is only one argument at Baxter's disposal that he can still use to defend his position on baptism: Infants are included with their parents and can be baptized on account of their parents' faith. Baxter's appeal to the law of nature extends to this important element in defense of infant baptism:

It is certain that they [i.e., infants] are actually members of all the Commonwealths in the world (*perfecte sed imperfecta membra*) being secured from violence by the laws, and capable of honours and right to inheritances, and of being real subjects under obligations to future duties, if they survive. And this shews that they are also capable of being Church-members, and that nature revealeth to us, that the Infants case much followeth the case of the Parents, especially in benefits.⁶⁷

Baxter argues by analogy of political as well as other societies, which also count infants among their members. This proves that the covenant consent of the parents may be reputed as the consent of their children. The conclusion is, says Baxter, that infants' church membership is established "partly in the law of nature, and partly in the fundamental promise. . . ."⁶⁸ Similarly, when he wants to prove that children of believers are disciples, Baxter makes a distinction between disciples in a larger sense and those in a narrower sense. The former are disciples relatively; they belong to Christ. The latter are actually learners. Children are disciples in the former sense only.⁶⁹ God makes children disciples "in a Natural way," insists Baxter.⁷⁰

The question arises as to what exactly is the relationship between parents and children. Baxter explains that the basis of the parents' ability to engage their children in covenant lies in the ownership they have over the infants. It is the "very nature" of the covenant to give up to God not only ourselves, but

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 111–12 (emphasis inverted). Cf. Baxter, *Review*, p. 10: "And why should I suspect such incapacity? are not Infants members of *other Societies*? are they not members of *Families*? and may not a *Family* be *Sanctified* by dedication to God? are they not members of all the *Kingdoms* in the world? and is it not the common *light of Nature*, which teacheth all men so to esteem them? are not Infants the *Kings Subjects*? and why may they not as well be *Christs Subjects* as the Kings? Have they not *Right of Inheritance and Honour*, even of *Crowns, Lordships, and Lands*? Do any Nations under Heaven *level all Children*, as if the Parents communicated neither good or evil to them? What reason then to suppose that Christ obliterate even Natures Laws?" Cf. *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 113, 324.

⁶⁸ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 114 (emphasis throughout in original). Cf. Packer, "Redemption and Restoration," pp. 320–21.

⁶⁹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

also *all that is ours*. Children are included as being our own.⁷¹ The conditionality of the covenant is not endangered by this concept. Says Baxter, "If it [i.e., the covenant] give any Right to *Infants conditionally* as it doth to Parents, it must be on a condition to be performed by the Parents, or such as are so far *entrusted*."⁷² Parents fulfill their children's condition. Baxter does not say, therefore, that the children, in their parents, actually do believe. Infants have covenant consent "reputatively in their Parents, whose will is as theirs."⁷³

It is obvious that Baxter's appeal to natural law reveals a close connection between his theory of original sin and his doctrine of baptism. Children may be said to will the actual sins of Adam and of their nearer parents because those sins are reputatively theirs. Baxter's concept of reputative voluntariness, presumably adopted from the Salmurian theologian John Cameron, is based on natural law.⁷⁴ Now it appears that Baxter uses this same argument in his doctrine of baptism. Infants may be said to have faith reputatively, because of the faith of their parents. It is understandable, therefore, that Baxter appeals to his *Two Disputations of Original Sin* (1675) to buttress his argument on infant baptism.⁷⁵ The conclusion must be that natural law plays a decisive role in Baxter's defense of infant baptism.

The antipaedobaptist William Kaye objects wryly that if Baxter were correct, "Christ might have saved his Disciples a great deal of labour in commanding them, first to disciple, by teaching; and then to baptize: And if by nature, or our being, we have that miraculous priviledge, why are we called by nature the Children of disobedience?"⁷⁶ Tombes also rejects Baxter's "bold attempt" to prove church membership of infants from the law of nature.

⁷¹ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 49; cf. pp. 202–3: "What then is the thing made necessary (and sufficient) by the Covenant to their salvation, but that they be the *seed of the faithful devoted by them to God*, that is, that their *Parents natural*, or at least *civil*, whose *Own* they are, and have the power of disposing of them for their good, do enter them by consent into the Covenant with Christ?" Cf. idem, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 223. Baxter elsewhere speaks of parents having a threefold interest in their children: that of owner, governor, and lover (*More Proofs*, p. 287).

⁷² Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 100.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 171; cf. p. 287: "Not that *in sensu physico* the person of the Child being the same with the Parents doth *consent in his consent*; but that the Parent having the treble interest in the Child, of an *Owner*, a *Governour* and a *Lover*, God by Nature and Grace conjunctly alloweth and requireth the Parent to dedicate the Child to God. . . . And this shall be as acceptable to the Childs Covenant-relation and rights, as if he had done it himself; and in this sense may be said reputatively[!] to have consented or Covenanted by his Parents, which in proper speech, is, *They did it for him at Gods Command*."

⁷⁴ See above, pp. 46–47.

⁷⁵ Baxter, *Review*, sig. A3r, pp. 31–32.

⁷⁶ Kaye, *Baptism Without Bason*, p. 3.

Churches are not instituted by the law of nature. Therefore, church membership cannot be determined by the law of nature.⁷⁷

When the children of believers grow into maturity, not all of them come to a personal appropriation of the covenant promises. This raises the question of whether it is really possible for parents to promise for their children that they shall take the Lord for their God. Baxter responds that we do not

promise absolutely that it shall *come to passe*; but we engage him [the child] to it *as his duty* by covenant, (which also would have been his duty, if he had not covenanted;) and we promise that he shall perform the conditions as a means to attain the benefits of the Covenant, upon this penalty, That if he perform them not, he shall lose the benefits of the Covenant, and bear the punishment threatned. So that we only promise that he shall keep the coveuant [*sic*]; or if he do not, we leave him liable to the penalty.⁷⁸

As long as children have not come to maturity, their parents' faith may be imputed to them. The children give their covenant consent reputatively when their parents believe. When the children come of age, however, the condition of faith can no longer be performed by the parents on behalf of the children. Then the act of faith is required of the mature children themselves.

1 Corinthians 7:14: Federal or Matrimonial Holiness?

Baxter does not regard the law of nature as the only basis for the parents' right to make covenants on behalf of their children. Scripture itself illustrates this right in the fact that parents had to circumcise their infants. Deut. 29:10–13 and 26:17–18 make it clear that parents may covenant on behalf of their children. In these passages parents engage their children in covenant with God.⁷⁹ Tombes, however, is not impressed by Baxter's "coining a new title to Baptism by the profession of parents or pro parents, of which the Scripture is altogether silent."⁸⁰ He deals with the appeal to Deut. 29 in some detail and does not agree that in this text parents *as parents* entered into the covenant for their children. The parents entered into the covenant as rulers on behalf of their subjects.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Tombes, *Anti-Pedobaptism*, III, 406.

⁷⁸ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 113–14.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113; cf. p. 178.

⁸⁰ Tombes, *Anti-Pedobaptism*, III, sig. c1r.

⁸¹ Tombes, *Anti-pedobaptism*, II, 236.

The exegesis of 1 Cor. 7:14 plays an important role in the discussions between Baxter and Tombes.⁸² This text initially made Tombes doubt the validity of the antipaedobaptist position. He soon discovered, however, that exegetes were by no means unanimous in the interpretation of this text. What does the word “holy” mean when the apostle writes, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy”? Baxter argues that the word “holy” means a state of separation from the world to God. The unbelieving partner is sanctified remotely, in a secondary sense. He or she is first sanctified to the believer, and so indirectly to God.⁸³ Children are holy by virtue of their parents.

Tombes rejects the notion that infants of believers are holy because of the covenant: “For it doth not speak of federall holinesse, but of holinesse, that I may so call it, Matrimoniall, so that the sense is, your children are holy, that is, legitimate.”⁸⁴ The intention of the text is not, argues Tombes, to prove that children are (federally) holy. Rather, their holiness — or legitimacy — is assumed. The apostle’s argument is *ab absurdo*: “If the unbelieving husband were not sanctified by the wife, then were your children unclean, but they are not unclean, but holy, *Ergo*, the unbelieving husband is sanctified to the wife.”⁸⁵ The doubt of the believing Corinthians concerned the legitimacy of marriages to unbelieving partners. The sanctity — or legitimacy — of the marriage bond was at stake. Tombes paraphrases the text as follows:

Let them, if they will, live together, though one be a believer, the other an unbeliever; for though there be difference in Religion, yet marriage continues still, they are husband and wife, and are so sanctified to each others use, in respect of their chaste enjoyment of each other, and it is no sin for them to accompany together, notwithstanding the unbelief of the one party; for marriage is honorable among all, even unbelievers, and the bed undefiled, *Heb.* 13.4.⁸⁶

Whereas Baxter thinks that the federal holiness of believers’ children is at stake in 1 Cor. 7:14, Tombes is of the opinion that the legitimacy of the marriage bond — matrimonial holiness — is under discussion.

⁸² Tombes, *Exercitation*, pp. 10–16; idem, *Examen*, pp. 69–82; Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 80–102; Tombes, *Antidote*, pp. 11–20; Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 253–56; Tombes, *Precursor*, pp. 44–48; idem, *Antipaedobaptism*, I, 180–260; Baxter, *Review*, pp. 8–9.

⁸³ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 81.

⁸⁴ Tombes, *Exercitation*, pp. 10–11.

⁸⁵ Tombes, *Examen*, pp. 75–76 (confused pagination, first occurrence).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Both Baxter and Tombes present numerous exegetical arguments for their respective positions. Of more significance for the present purpose, however, is the role the different interpretations play in the discussion. Obviously, both Tombes and Baxter consider the exegesis of 1 Cor. 7:14 of paramount importance for the issue at hand. Tombes's discovery of "matrimoniall holinesse" as the key to the interpretation of this text was, initially, determinative of his anti-paedobaptist position.⁸⁷ For Baxter it is equally important to maintain that the text refers to "federall holinesse." 1 Cor. 7:14 proves to him that the parents' faith is imputed to their children. Thus interpreted, the text yields vital support for the main pillar underlying Baxter's theory: the federal bond between parents and children.

Baptism and the Salvation of Infants

That Baxter chooses infants' church membership as the cornerstone of his defense of infant baptism is more than a clever trick to catch his opponent off guard. The hope of salvation for one's children is at stake. The question that must be addressed, therefore, is not just whether the infants of believers have a right to baptism. The underlying question is whether they have a share in the covenant and its blessings. Baxter employs several arguments, therefore, against what he regards as depriving the children of believers of their rightful standing before God. He argues that a denial of infants' church membership places the church of Christ be in a worse state now than it was before his coming.⁸⁸ In fact, argues Baxter, "[i]f the children of Believers be now put out of the Church, then they are in a *worse* condition than the very *children of the Gentiles* were before the comming [*sic*] of Christ. . . ."⁸⁹ Prior to Christ's coming, it was at least possible for gentiles, along with their children, to become members of the Jewish church. This would have put these children in a better position than the children of believers are today, if they are not members. Tombes rejects the charge that his doctrine leaves believers' children deprived of mercy. Their nonvisible church membership is not "pœnal, or deprivation of a mercy now, it being only by the alteration of the Church-frame."⁹⁰

Baxter does not hesitate to press further. Since there are only two kingdoms, children must belong either to the visible kingdom of the devil or to the visible church. Says Baxter,

⁸⁷ Tombes, *Apology*, pp. 6–8.

⁸⁸ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 55. Cf. Baxter, *Review*, p. 15: "Either it is a *Mercy* or *no Mercy* to be in *Christs Family* or Church? if none, why do *you* value it? if it *be* why should we think that the Saviour of the world procureth it to *no Infants*? nay that he came to leave them out."

⁸⁹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 56.

⁹⁰ Tombes, *Precursor*, p. 35.

That Doctrine which maketh all Infants to be Members of the visible Kingdome of the Devill, is false Doctrine. But that Doctrine which denyeth any Infants to be members of the visible Church, doth make them all Members of the visible Kingdome of the Devil. Therefore it is false Doctrine.⁹¹

The salvation of infants is in danger if they are excluded from the church. In that case, children do not belong to the church but to the kingdom of Satan. Because the salvation of infants is ultimately at issue, Baxter devotes a lengthy argument to this point: "That Doctrine which leaveth us no sound grounded hope of the Justification, or Salvation of any dying Infants in the world, is certainly false Doctrine."⁹²

Tombes denies that his doctrine gives no hope for the salvation of the children of believers: "I deny not that many infants of believers are in the Covenant of Grace: nor dare I say that no infants of unbelievers are in the Covenant of Christ in this sense: I onely say I neither know which of the one or the other are thus in the Covenant of Grace."⁹³ But Baxter insists that the deprivation of hope is the consequence of the "unchurching" of infants. The only hope that Tombes has for children of believers is the hope of election, the hope of the absolute covenant. This, insists Baxter, "is no ground of Hope for Infants at all: for it neither directly nor indirectly promiseth any Mercy to them, nor saith any more of Mercy, than of hardening. . . ."⁹⁴ The result is that Tombes comes into the proximity of the Antinomians: "I will not say *Mr. T.* is an Antinomian, for I think he is not: But this opinion, that the Covenant of Grace, which Baptism sealet, is only to the Elect, and is not conditional, is one of the two master-pillars in the Antinomian fabrick."⁹⁵

⁹¹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 71. Cf. idem, *Review*, p. 14: "And truly me thinks you [i.e., Edward Hutchinson] too much honour the Kingdome of the Devil, if you make it visibly contain all the *Seed of the Woman*, even of the *Faithful*, till they come to age. It is too great, I will not feign it to be greater." Cf. Tombes, *Anti-Pedobaptism*, III, 537–42.

⁹² Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 72.

⁹³ Tombes, *Precursor*, p. 37. Cf. idem, *Anti-Pedobaptism*, III, 544: "I have always asserted that there is a certainty and hope that God will justifie and save some infants in the world, some infants of believers, and have often acknowledged those that Christ prayed for, laying on his hands were elect ones, but the question is whether there be any such promise to a believer and his natural seed which assures salvation to them as the seed of believers, and consequently whether there be a certain hope of them all dying in their infancy that they shall be saved. This I have denied because I know no such promise in Scripture. . . ."

⁹⁴ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 75.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 224; cf. p. 226. Baxter's judgment at this point is particularly sharp, considering Tombes's avowed opposition to Antinomianism. When in London, Tombes was once "reviled" when he refuted the Antinomian preacher Tobias Crisp in a sermon, mentioning him by name (Tombes, *Precursor*, pp. 19–20).

Baxter repeatedly appeals to the Canons of Dort (1619) in support for his position. The canons state, "Since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy [Art. I.17]."⁹⁶ Baxter finds himself in full agreement with the concept of federal holiness as it had received confessional status in the Canons of Dort. What is more, the Canons of Dort base the hope of the salvation of the believers' seed on this federal holiness. As noted earlier, Baxter's defense of infant baptism is intended to safeguard the hope of justification of the children of believers by including them in church and covenant. Baxter thus agrees with the Canons of Dort on what he himself regards as a significant motif in his defense of infant baptism: the justification and salvation of the children of believers. Consequently, Baxter rarely bypasses an opportunity to express his agreement with this article of the Canons of Dort.⁹⁷

Tombes, however, does not admit that Baxter's doctrine yields more hope for the salvation of infants than his own. He notes that Baxter hesitates somewhat with regard to the salvation of all believers' infants. Baxter states that "we have certain ground to conclude, that this salvation belongeth to some Infants, and visible Churchmembership to all the Seed of the faithfull."⁹⁸ Here he makes a distinction between the church membership of the children of believers and their salvation. Of the former he is certain; the latter is given to "some Infants." Indeed, Baxter says that he does not dare to assert "more than a probability, even a full certainty of the salvation of all Believers Infants so dying," although he considers this opinion "far better grounded" than that of Tombes.⁹⁹ It is not clear what causes Baxter's hesitation. Considering his consistent appeal to the parents' faith as the basis for the church membership of infants, one would expect a confident assertion of the justification and salvation of all the offspring of believers that die in their infancy.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, 6th ed., rev. David S. Schaff (1931; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1983), 3:585.

⁹⁷ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 237; *Certain Disputations*, p. 128; *Present Thoughts* (London, 1657), p. 11; *More Proofs*, pp. 170, 198, 208; *Catholick Theologie*, I.ii.72, 115, II.104; *Review*, p. 38; *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 223; *Christian Directory* (1673), in *Works*, I:651 [5:327]. Cf. Jeremias, "Richard Baxters Catholic Theology," p. 200.

⁹⁸ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 78.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Tombes immediately discovers this weak element in Baxter's argument (Tombes, *Anti-Pedobaptism*, III, 555).

Baxter's hope for the justification and salvation of infants is limited by the possibility that infants may, ultimately, fall from grace.¹⁰¹ His careful analysis of this difficulty proves that he is sensitive to the problem. First, he points out that the church fathers "commonly held that even of the Adult, many fall from true Grace, Justification, and a state of Life. . . ."¹⁰² He then appeals to the loss of a state of salvation in the case of Adam.¹⁰³ Moreover, while some have strong habits of faith, others have weak ones. With regard to infants, he finally concludes that they may have so much grace, as Adam had, "as to *meer Power* to do what he did not, and as the Dominicans call *sufficient*, or *necessary Grace*; and perhaps such as is the *innitital* Disposition before full Sanctification. And this much may qualifie them for present *Pardon* and *Justification*, For *Actual Love and Obedience* is not their Duty, and consequently not the *proper habit*, beyond a *Power* and *seminal Disposition*, as of necessity to their first state of Grace: And as *Adam lost this much*, so may they."¹⁰⁴

Baxter faces the same dilemma between the doctrines of infant baptism and the perseverance of the saints that he encountered in his debate with Thomas Blake.¹⁰⁵ Also in that discussion, Baxter insists that the parents' profession of faith is the basis for infant baptism.¹⁰⁶ His theology runs into problems in those cases in which a child turns out to be an impenitent unbeliever and thereby violates the covenant of grace. If the parents' faith is true, justifying faith, is ultimate violation of the covenant on the part of their infant a real possibility? Was the covenant merely enacted for such a child or did the infant receive the very contents of the promise? Considering the parents' fulfillment of the condition, the latter must be the case. If, indeed, such a child received the very benefits of the covenant and may yet lose them at a later age, this must somehow qualify the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

Baxter is aware of the minefield that he is entering in his debate with Blake. He is also aware that the question of the possibility of the loss of saving grace in infants leads to further questions with respect to adults. In discussing Solomon's sins he treads very carefully: "If I should but look on it as a thing uncertain whether *Solomon* had true grace at that time, or whether any intercision were made in his Justification and true Sanctification, I should in-

¹⁰¹ Cf. Tombes's accusations on this point (*Anti-Pedobaptism*, III, 256 [incorrect pagination, sig. Kk4^v], 263–64 [incorrect pagination, sigs. Ll4^r–v]). Baxter himself comments, "It is a very hard thing to confute an Anabaptist, without granting that *Infant Justification* may be lost" (*Catholic Theologie*, I.ii.115).

¹⁰² Baxter, *Review*, p. 25.

¹⁰³ Cf. Baxter, *Catechising of Families* (1683), in *Works*, 4:156 [19:267].

¹⁰⁴ Baxter, *Review*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. above, p. 28.

¹⁰⁶ Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, pp. 4, 128, 202, 237.

cur the heavy censure of many Divines. If I question not the certaintie of his grace & perseverance, then I am supposed to make every common scandalous sinner to bee fit for the reputation of a Saint. . . . What is to bee don in this strait?"¹⁰⁷ On the next page, he seems to answer this very question: "But wee are not certain whether *Solomon* were justified and in a state of salvation at that time. . . ." ¹⁰⁸ Baxter carefully avoids making any definite pronouncement regarding the perseverance of adult justified believers. Still, his position on the place of infants in the covenant demands a reappraisal of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Baxter does not come to an outright denial of the perseverance of adult saints. It is doubtful, however, whether he has much of a basis left for a possible defense of the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Baxter is aware of the difficulty that his concept of federal holiness entails. But, Baxter reproaches Tombes, this difficulty is "with *Davenant* and the Synod of *Dort*" to be preferred over "the consequents of your turning them all out of the visible Church."¹⁰⁹

Baxter's agreement with Article I.17 of the Canons of Dort reveals the root of his disagreement with Tombes regarding infant baptism. The disagreement ultimately arises from a different conception of the covenant: Baxter connects baptism to the conditional covenant of grace. Tombes connects baptism to the absolute covenant. The difference is one between two opposing federal schemes — the one emphasizes the conditional covenant, whereas the other denies the existence of a conditional covenant and, therefore, links baptism to election.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 327.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 328.

¹⁰⁹ Baxter, *More Proofs*, p. 170. Cf. below, pp. 77–78, n. 27.

V

Baptism: Real and Relative Grace

BAPTISM AND REGENERATION: BURGES AND BEDFORD

Moral and Physical Instrumentality

Baxter's early doubts regarding infant baptism were partly due to his objections to the sacramentalist position, as he had encountered it in Cornelius Burges and Thomas Bedford. For a correct understanding of the basic difference between Baxter and these two Calvinist sacramentalists it is necessary to trace carefully some terminological definitions and distinctions that Baxter makes. In the beginning of his animadversions against Bedford, Baxter makes three related distinctions: (1) between grace that makes a real, physical change on man (regeneration and sanctification) and grace that makes only a relative change (remission, justification, and adoption); (2) between a physical and a moral donation; and (3) between a physical and a moral instrument.¹

These three distinctions must not be seen as each dealing with something different; rather, they overlap each other. On the one hand, grace that makes a real, physical change on man is a physical donation, received by means of a physical instrument. On the other hand, grace that makes only a relative change on man is a moral donation, and is received by means of a moral instrument. Baxter explains the distinction between a physical and a moral donation as follows:

So we must distinguish betwixt a Donation Physical, which works the said Physical Effects (as when you put money into a mans hand:) and a Donation Moral, which gives not any Real Physical being immediately, directly of it self; but onely so gives a Right to such a Being or Good, as

¹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 295.

you give a way your house or Lands by a word, or by a written Deed of Gift, without moving the thing it self.²

The difference between a physical and a moral donation appears to be that a physical donation gives a physical object in an immediate, direct sense, whereas a moral donation involves no such physical transference but gives a mere right to something. In the case of physical instrumentality, there is a "Real Influx or proper Causality" of a physical change.³ A deed of gift, however, is a moral instrument. It "doth not truly and properly effect, but yet is such as the effect is imputed to it. . . ."⁴ It is also called *causa imputativa*.

Unless these distinctions are kept in focus it is easy to misunderstand Baxter as coming close to a sacramentalist position himself. At times he attributes such an efficacy to baptism that one may wonder where, if at all, the exact difference between Baxter and the sacramentalist Calvinists lies. It is of utmost importance to realize that whenever Baxter seems to attribute efficacy to baptism he speaks of baptism as a moral instrument only. The issue is especially confusing because he often speaks of the effect of baptism without explicitly mentioning the concept of moral instrumentality. This lack of clarity may lead to misinterpretation.

Cornelius Burges: Baptismal Regeneration in Elect Children

With this terminological clarification in mind, it becomes easier to understand Baxter's objections to the Calvinist sacramentalists.⁵ Cornelius Burges, rector of St. Magnus, London Bridge, and of Watford, Hertfordshire, as well as chaplain to King Charles I, states his position on baptismal regeneration succinctly in his *Baptismall Regeneration* (1629).⁶ In this work Burges defends himself against the charge "not only of *Arminianisme*, but euen of direct *Popery*, and of teaching a *Doctrine of diuells*."⁷ He advocates a middle way between those who regard baptism as "so *absolutely* necessary, as that *none* can be saued without it" and those who give too little to baptism, some of whom "deny to it all present efficacy in, & vpon infants, ordinarily, in the act of

² Ibid., p. 295.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 306.

⁵ For Baxter's views on baptismal regeneration, see Morgan, *Nonconformity*, p. 168; Packer, "Redemption and Restoration," pp. 326–29; Beougher, "Conversion," pp. 177–78.

⁶ Holifield gives an excellent description of Burges's doctrine of baptismal regeneration (*Covenant Sealed*, pp. 83–86). Cf. John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England: From the Reformation to the End of Last Century*, vol. 1 (London: Strahan, 1870), pp. 207–10.

⁷ Burges, *Baptismall Regeneration*, p. 4.

administration.”⁸ In his treatise Burges explicitly limits himself to a discussion of the efficacy of baptism “vpon the *Elect*, vnto *Regeneration*.”⁹ He does not deny the efficacy of baptism with regard to the remission of sin, but also does not deal with it in his book on regeneration. Put in terms of the distinction mentioned above, Burges does not deny that baptism effects the relative grace of justification, but his present concern is the real change of regeneration effected by baptism.

Burges makes a crucial distinction between initial and actual regeneration. It is a distinction that corresponds to that between form and being in natural life:

Initiall which we may also terme *Seminall* or *Potentiall* life, I call that which consisteth in participati of the spirit of *Christ*, as the *forme* of this spirituall life: the spirit being the first principle of Regeneration, by whom the first seede and foundation thereof is laid in a Christian. And this is life as it were in the roote, like vnto the first principles of reason laid vp in the soule rationally, before it haue actually enabled the body to moue, and act rationally.¹⁰

By recourse to the scholastic distinction between form and being, Burges is able to posit a distinction between initial and actual regeneration as well.¹¹

Having distinguished initial and actual regeneration, Burges then posits that the two do not always occur at the same time.¹² Thus, he comes to state his main position:

It Is most agreeable to the Institution of Christ, that All Elect Infants that are baptized, (vnlesse in some extraordinary cases) doe, ordinarily, receiue, from Christ, the Spirit in Baptisme, for their first solemne initiation into Christ, and for their future actuall renouation, in Gods good time, if they liue to yeares of discretion, and enioy the other ordinary meanes of Grace appointed of God to this end.¹³

⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 14–15. Burges also illustrates the distinction by means of other comparisons: initial and actual regeneration relate as the transplantation of a tree into new soil and the drawing of the nutrients from the soil into the tree; the two relate as the stretching of Elisha on the dead child whereby the body warmed up but did not yet move, and his stretching himself on the child a second time, which caused the child to sneeze seven times and to open its eyes (2 Kings 4); again, the two relate as the incubation of the Spirit on the face of the waters (Gen. 1:2) and the subsequent creation of each creature (*Baptismall Regeneration*, pp. 16–17).

¹¹ For the distinction between *forma* and *essentia*, see Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1985), pp. 123–24.

¹² Burges, *Baptismall Regeneration*, p. 17.

¹³ Ibid., p. 21 (emphasis throughout in original).

According to Burges, initial or seminal regeneration occurs in baptism, whereas actual regeneration takes place in due time, when the infant comes to maturity. It is noteworthy that this twofold regeneration only takes place as it concerns elect children. Other infants are not regenerated in baptism, presumably because they would receive the "seed & principle" of regeneration without it coming to actual fruition.

Thomas Bedford: Baptismal Regeneration non ponenti obicem

Baxter does not elaborate on his disagreement with Burges's position. It is nevertheless easy to see why the latter's views created doubts in Baxter's mind regarding the validity of paedobaptism. Baxter's objections to Burges's views tempted him into the antipaedobaptist direction. An analysis of the discussion between Baxter and Bedford regarding baptismal regeneration gives insight into these objections. There are obvious similarities between Burges and Bedford with regard to baptismal regeneration. First, both distinguish between the grace conferred in baptism and the grace granted at a later age through the use of means. Comments Bedford, "REGENERATION is intended in those words of the Church, *A new birth to Righteousness*. As sinn is purged away: so also the Spirit of grace bestowed in Baptism, to be, as the habit, or rather as the seed, whence the future Acts of grace, and holiness, watered by the word of God, and good education, may in time spring forth."¹⁴ Second, Bedford, like Burges, emphasizes the efficacy of baptism. Bedford believes that baptism itself confers grace.¹⁵ This, of course, does not happen

¹⁴ Bedford, *Treatise of the Sacraments*, p. 116; cf. p. 129.

¹⁵ In one respect, Bedford seems to go beyond Burges. Burges reserves the term "actual grace" for the originating of faith when a person has come of age. Bedford does not do so. He also applies the term "actual regeneration" to baptismal regeneration. The initial grace conferred in baptism is "actual regeneration," albeit only in principle:

Aphorism 4: Baptism not only confers power or a conditional fruit but also actual regeneration, at least in a sealed act, an act in principle. Aphorism 5: From this principle of regeneration and seminal grace the practised act of faith and of graces is usually raised up by him who works it, namely, the Holy Spirit, in the ministry of the word, and in preparing the soul for confirmation. [*Aphor. 4. Baptismus confert non tantum potentiam seu fructum conditionalem: sed & actualem Regenerationem: saltem in actu signato & radicali. Aphor. 5. Ex radicali hac Regeneratione, & seminali gratia educi solet Actus exercitus fidei & gratiarum: Operante, sc. Spiritu sancto in Ministerio verbi, & preparante animam ad Confirmationem.*] (*Vindicie Gratia sacramentalis*, pp. 94–95; emphasis inverted)

If a baptized person comes to repentance at a later age, the baptism would still be valid, states Bedford. Such a person had always been united to Christ, incorporated in him, "because in such a man Repentance, and Faith, are *in actu signato, & radicali*, tho not in *actu exercito*, secretly lodging in the heart, and seen to God, tho not sensible to the man himself" (*Treatise of the Sacraments*, pp. 175–76).

when the recipient of the sacrament presents an obstacle to its operation.¹⁶ Baptism regenerates, confers grace, *non ponenti obicem*, to the person who does not present an obstacle. Infants are unable to present obstacles,¹⁷ which only arise from indolence, infidelity, impenitence, or wrong notions.¹⁸

Baxter gives an accurate summary statement when he says that it is Bedford's opinion

[t]hat the Sacrament of Baptism doth as an Instrumental Efficient Cause, confer and effect in all that duely receive it, not putting a bar by their unbelief (which no Infant doth) the grace of Regeneration of nature, even Actual Regeneration, at least *in actu signato & radicali*. . . . That as sin is purged away, so the spirit of Grace is (to all these) bestowed in Baptism to be as the Habit, or rather as the Seed whence the future Acts of Grace and Holiness watered by the Word and good Education may in time spring forth.¹⁹

¹⁶ Says Bedford,

It is submitted that the power of the sacrament and the virtue are not absolute (this admits of no resistance) but only conditional (this does not produce an effect except on a condition). Moreover, the following condition is established: nobody who places an obstacle for himself. . . . Therefore, it seems better to say: sacraments confer grace to the person who does not present an obstacle. [Supponitur vim Sacramenti, & virtutem non esse absolutam, quæ nullam admittat resistantiam; sed tantum conditionatam, quæ non producat effectum nisi sub conditione. Ponitur autem conditio hæc, *Nè quis sibi ponat obicem*. . . . Quocirca magis placet dicere, Sacramenta conferunt gratiam non-ponenti obicem.] (*Vindicie Gratie sacramentalis*, pp. 41–42)

¹⁷ With regard to infants, Bedford states that supposing the parents, sureties, minister, and congregation have done their parts, “I shall not make any doubt but the Infant is regenerate in baptisme, justified and freed from the guilt and dominion of sin: Consequently saved if hee dye in his infancie” (*Ready Way*, pp. 49–50; cf. *Vindicie Gratie sacramentalis*, pp. 102–4). Even if “the parties aforesaid tardie, and faulty,” Bedford states, “I rather lean to the opinion of them, who hold the efficacy of the Sacrament not to bee hindered by the personall neglect of these, nor the infant deprived through the fault of his parents, and suretys” (*Ready Way*, p. 53).

¹⁸ With regard to the nature of presenting an obstacle, Bedford comments,

From this it is easy to gather what it means not to present an obstacle: namely, not opposing that depraved will to the sacrament; not to foster that indolence and lack of dedication; not to sacrifice to infidelity and impenitence; not to be implicated in the sin of not discerning; not to indulge in wrong notions. Precisely this is what it means not to present an obstacle. And in this way the sacraments confer grace to the person who does not present an obstacle. [Ex quibus facile est colligere, *Quid sit non-ponere obicem*: Nempe malam illam voluntatem Sacramento non opponere: Desidiosam illam & inde votam non fovere; Infidelitati & Imœpinitentia non litare; “*Reatu τοῦ μὴ διακρίνειν [sic; διακρίνειν]*” non implicari: Fictioni non indulgere: Hoc ipsum est, non-ponere obicem: Atque hujusmodi obicem non-ponenti Sacramenta conferunt gratiam.] (*Vindicie Gratie sacramentalis*, pp. 44–45)

Elsewhere, Bedford states, “Now that barr, which alone hindereth, is impenitency, and infidelity . . .” (*Treatise of the Sacraments*, p. 178).

¹⁹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 294.

Bedford maintains that God's Word and a good education may lead to further grace. This last comment is indicative, however, of an important difference between Burges and Bedford. Whereas Burges maintains that initial baptismal grace was restricted to the elect, Bedford extends it to all recipients of baptism. Consequently, he states that "future Acts of Grace and Holiness . . . *may* in time spring forth." Baptismal regeneration is not always followed by this future grace.²⁰

Bedford posits a sharp distinction between the initial, baptismal grace of regeneration and further grace of repentance and faith. The former does not necessarily entail the latter. The grace of regeneration may be lost. This exposes Bedford to obvious criticism. Baxter retorts, "By this Doctrine you feign *Cor novum* not to be proper to the Elect: which is contrary to all Anti-arminians that I know of."²¹ Baxter insists that Bedford's position comes close to the Arminian position:

You feign a *cor novum* which will not bring forth the good fruits of *cor novum*, when occasion is offered; whereas Christ saith, A good tree will bring forth good fruits; by their fruits ye shall know them. What is the use of Habits but to produce the Acts? And why then do not these habits bring forth actual Holiness, when they come to Age? Do they lose them before? Or what is it? And what a vain useless thing do you make of Gods special Grace?²²

The implication of Baxter's objection is clear: If initial grace may be lost, God's regenerating grace is treated more as common grace than as special grace. After all, a Calvinist can hardly assert that special grace may be lost.

Although Baxter disagrees with Bedford's linking of regeneration to baptism, this does not mean that he completely denies the possibility that a habit of grace may be infused at baptism: "I deny not . . . that God may renew the Soul of an Infant at the time of his Baptism: he is free to work when he pleaseth. But, 1. He hath not promised or revealed that he will do so, much less instituted it to that end. 2. And if he do, yet Baptism is no instrument of that work."²³ Thus, although regeneration of infants is possible, this is not

²⁰ Bedford explicitly states that he has changed his position from that of Burges to the view that there is "no necessity to restrain the efficacy of Baptism *in conferenda gratia* to the elect" (in Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 350). Cf. Holifield, *Covenant Sealed*, p. 103.

²¹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 362.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 305; cf. p. 315: "But yet my opinion is, that the soul is so capable, and that God doth give this seed of grace, or habitual grace to some Infants: but that is, 1. Only to his Elect, 2. And that Baptism was never instituted to be an Instrument of working it. *I* am past doubt: But for the pardon of original sin, and other Relative grace, *I* affirm that we are to judge it probably given to the child of every Believer. . . ."

God's ordinary way of giving grace. This extraordinary work of God should certainly not be the basis for a theory of baptismal regeneration.²⁴

Status salutis and the Salvation of Infants

Although Baxter thinks that regeneration should not be tied to baptism, he does acknowledge that perfect sanctifying grace is needed for the actual capacity of enjoying God. That this capacity will be given to all people — including infants — at the point of death, Baxter considers “all past dispute.”²⁵ But the child does not need this sanctifying grace to have a *right* to the enjoyment of God. Perfect sanctifying grace is only necessary for the immediate *capacity* of enjoying God in glory. A *status salutis* is well possible prior to perfect sanctifying grace.²⁶ With an appeal to Davenant, Baxter insists that this *status salutis*, which is a relative state, is possible without the habit or seed of real regenerating, sanctifying grace.²⁷

²⁴ Although Baxter nowhere accepts a sacramentalist position, in his *Treatise of Conversion* (1657) he appears more open to the idea of a possible baptismal regeneration: “It is most probable [...] that God doth also make some change on the hearts of infants, secretly giving them some seed of inward grace before or in their baptism” (in *Works*, 2:437 [7:129–30]). Here the extraordinary possibility of the Spirit infusing grace has turned into something “most probable.”

Also in *Confirmation and Restauration* (1658) Baxter comments, “Of those that are baptized in infancy, some do betimes receive the secret seeds of grace, which by the blessing of a holy education, (and some among the profane,) is stirring within them, according to their capacity . . . and turning them into actual acquaintance with Christ, as soon as they arrive at full natural capacity; so that they never were actual ungodly persons” (in *Works*, 4:305 [14:450]).

The change in Baxter's position is not fundamental, however. In his *Christian Directory* (1673) he continues to refer to the discussions with Bedford and Ward (in *Works*, 1:653, 657 [5:332, 346]). When he acknowledges the possibility that God may infuse habits in infants, he consistently maintains that God only does this to elect children and that God has not bound himself to do this in baptism (*Christian Directory*, in *Works*, 1:659 [5:352]; *Treatise of Conversion*, in *Works*, 2:437 [7:130]).

²⁵ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 358. Cf. *Treatise of Conversion*, in *Works*, 2:437 [7:130]: “It is certain, that sometimes befoe their [i.e., infants'] death, he doth give this Spirit to elect infants, according to their capacity, and thereby fir them for glory I mean those that die in infancy.”

²⁶ Baxter accordingly states that “*cor novum* is not to Infants necessary *ad statum salutis*; (though it be *ad ipsam salutem*)” (*Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 363).

²⁷ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 357. Holifield has argued that “Baxter also proposed, very tentatively, that baptism itself conveyed a ‘degree of grace’ to infants within the covenant. This ‘middle infant grace’ conferred the power to obey God, but it was unable to give a ‘rooted, habitual determination’ to the will” (*Covenant Sealed*, p. 95). If Holifield were correct, Baxter's position would be quite ambivalent. The entire controversy against Bedford (and Burges) was directed against the notion of baptismal regeneration. This does not comport well with the idea of “middle infant grace” being conferred in the rite of baptism. Baxter does not excel in clarity. He does indeed make the comment that “common grace, and I think this middle infant grace which children have, as related to their parents, may be lost” (*Catechising of Families* [1683], in *Works*, 4:156 [19:268]). But Baxter does not say that this “middle infant grace” — to which he refers but once — is infused in baptism.

Baxter takes the idea that children may fall from a state of salvation from John Davenant, to whom he refers repeatedly in this regard. Baxter considers the issue extremely difficult (*Christian*

The reason for this is obvious, insists Baxter: "Else no man living can be said to be in a state of Salvation (which is contrary to our sense, and common speech) For no man is in an immediate capacity to enjoy God in Glory, till he be perfectly sanctified and freed from each degree of sin; But no man is so perfect till after Death, (in order of nature at least.)"²⁸ Baxter defines *status salutis* as merely a relative state. Habitual grace is not necessary to be in a *status salutis*. Baxter makes a strict separation between regeneration and justification, between real and relative grace. In doing so, he undermines Bed-

Directory, in *Works*, 1:657 [5:346], 1:660 [5:354]; *Catechising of Families*, in *Works*, 4:155 [19:267]). He says that he "had rather with Davenant believe that the fore-described infant state of salvation [!], which came by the parents, may be lost by the parents and the children, (though such a sanctified, renewed nature in holy habits of love as the adult have be never lost,) than believe that no infants are in the covenant of grace and to be baptized" (*Christian Directory*, in *Works*, 1:661 [5:357]; cf. 1:657 [5:346]; *More Proofs*, pp. 207–8). Similarly, to the objection that his doctrine implies that infants may lose their state of salvation Baxter replies, "Davenant aswereth this, That Infant-grace may be lost, and yet not the Grace of the Adult: Because it is but a *Relative Regeneration* [!], and an *Extrinseck Remission* of Sin [!], that giveth them Right to Impunity and Life, or if they are said to have the *Spirit*, it is not in a fixed Habit of Grace" (*End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 224; cf. *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 334–35, 386–87; *Confession*, p. 208; *Catholick Theologie*, I.ii.115; II.214). That which a child loses is not real grace; it is not a habit of faith. Rather, it is relative grace, referred to by Baxter as a "state of salvation," "relative regeneration," and "extrinsic remission of sin." When Baxter, therefore, maintains that infant grace may be lost, this must be interpreted in the light of his other statements to this effect, which often intimate that he is speaking only of a relative grace. Still, he also says that what infants may loose is a power to believe, such as Adam had (*Catechising of Families*, in *Works*, 19:267–68; *Catholick Theologie*, I.ii.115; *Review*, p. 26; *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, pp. 224–25). This does imply the presence of some degree of real, sanctifying grace in infants. This grace gives children the right to salvation (*End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 224). It appears, then, that Baxter was not entirely consistent on the question of whether God infuses real grace in infants which may be lost.

It is also important to keep in mind that when Baxter states that baptism confers the relative grace of remission, he means that baptism completes this process by *solemnization and obsignation* of something *which was before effectually, currantly and certainly made by the Covenant* (*Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 298). The rite of baptism as such does not effect any grace, whether real or relative. Therefore, when the church fathers say that baptism puts people into a state of grace, they are not referring to the bare rite of baptism only. Properly speaking, the word "baptism" "doth take in the inward actions of the heart, as well as the outward professions and actions" (*Christian Directory*, in *Works*, 1:561 [5:45]). The church fathers regarded baptism in this broad sense, insists Baxter: "[A]nd in this sense the ancients took it, when they affirmed that all that were baptized were regenerated, pardoned, and made the children of God" (*ibid.*, 1:561 [5:46]; cf. 1:13 [2:17–18]; 1:650 [5:324]; 1:653 [5:333]). The outward act of baptism for Baxter is only the completion of an entire process that includes one's covenanting with God. This entire process is called "baptism."

It is true that Baxter, apart from his controversy with Bedford, speaks more positively about the possibility that infants receive seeds of regeneration. He is reticent, however, in linking this to the rite of baptism and in admitting that it may be lost (see above, p. 57, n. 41; p. 69, n. 108). Holifield is correct in drawing attention to the fact that Baxter insisted on the importance of the diligent godly education and instruction of the parents as a means of God to work on the souls of infants (*Covenant Sealed*, pp. 96–97).

²⁸ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 358.

ford's plea for baptismal regeneration, because this plea is based on the assumption that relative and real grace cannot be separated.

Baxter maintains, however, that natural incapacity prevents the child from fulfilling the condition of the covenant. Hence the parents' faith is the condition of the infant's pardon and salvation.²⁹ When the infant grows up he will lose the remission of original sin, justification, and the other benefits that were sealed in baptism, unless the covenant is personally appropriated by the maturing child. The child himself must then fulfill the condition. If he does not, "all the forgiven sin returns. . . ."³⁰ Again with an appeal to Davenant, Baxter maintains that perseverance of the saints does not mean that the quality or act of a just man as such cannot be lost.³¹ That this qualifies his doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is obvious.³² Notwithstanding the fact that he lays himself open to the charge of Arminianism, Baxter main-

²⁹ Cf. above, pp. 54 and 58–63. The point recurs in *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 297, 301, 313–15, 330–31, 359, 364.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 335: "When we teach the perseverance of the Saints in a state of justification once obtained, we do not deny the quality or Act of a faithful or just man in regard of the subject to be mutable and loseable. But wee affirm that the special love of God doth not permit, that he who by believing in Christ was justified and adopted to be a Son of God, should by losing that faith and sanctification, cease to be a Son of God, and perish for ever." Cf. above, p. 57, n. 41.

³² Samuel Ward runs into the same difficulty. He insists that baptism remits original sin. This relative right may be lost when an infant comes of age. Ward is aware of the problem this entails: "You will say that according to this assertion of ours we posit an apostasy of the righteous, and clearly assail the perseverance of the saints . . ." [Dices secundum hoc nostrum assertum ponere apostasiam justorum, et planè impugnare perseverantiam sanctorum . . .] (in Gataker, *De Baptismatis Infantilis vi*, p. 270). He resolves the problem by means of the following arguments:

1. At the same time I assert that the justified never fall away from that justice totally, nor incur . . . that which has been remitted, nor are damned due to original sin, but are put to death because of later wrongdoings. [(S)imul assero (to)taliter justificatos nunquam excidere ab illa justitia, nec . . . in id quod remissum est, incidere, nec in originali peccato damnari, sed propter postrema crimina morte affici.] (*ibid.*, p. 270)
2. I respond that indulgence of original sin, which is sufficient for the justification of a child, is not sufficient for their justification once they have come to an adult age. [Respondeo, Originalis peccati indulgentiam, q̄ sufficit parvulo ad justificationem, non sufficere eisdem ad justificationem, cum ad adultam ætatem pervenerint.] (*ibid.*, p. 270)
3. Whenever perseverance of the saints is examined, it is evident that those saints are dealt with who are capable of the use of reason and are justified by acts of faith and repentance which are conceived by the preached Gospel and who are appointed to persevere in the same faith by an act of their own will, or to endure by perseverance. [(Q)ando de perseverantia Sanctorum queritur, perspicuum est, de illis Sanctis agi, q̄ rationis usu pollent, actibusq̄ fidei et pœnitentiæ ex Evangelio prædicato conceptis justificantur, q̄q̄ in eadem fide propriæ voluntatis actu perseverare, aut à perseverantia sistere, ponuntur.] (*ibid.*, p. 271)

tains his position. He considers it the option with the least amount of problems attached.³³

Baptism as Instrument: Metaphysical, Metonymical, or Moral

Baxter's charge that Bedford treats God's regenerating grace as common grace because it may be lost, is not his only allegation. He has another objection, one that is directed against Burges as well as Bedford. Bedford insists that initial or seminal grace, which in due time is supposed to lead to acts of faith, is infused by baptism as an instrumental, efficient cause. He admits that the Holy Spirit is the principal efficient cause, but argues that baptism is an efficient cause as well.³⁴ Bedford does not regard baptism as a physical instrument, however. He shies away from the use of the word "physical." Instead, he speaks of baptism as a metaphysical instrument.

For Baxter, such a *tertium* between physical and moral instrumentality does not exist: "Hath it not either a proper influence and causality, or not? Is there any middle between these?"³⁵ In his letter to Baxter, Bedford elaborates on his understanding of the instrumentality of baptism. He says that the only efficacy he meant to give to baptism is that of a metonymical instrumentality. He agrees with Baxter that the instrumentality of baptism is "such a cause which indeed does not truly effect but which is nevertheless such that the ef-

³³ Cf. above, p. 69. Baxter considers Bedford's opinion far more susceptible to the charge of Arminianism. If, as Bedford maintains, all infants receive the habit of grace (initial, seminal grace) upon baptism, their possible later apostasy means the loss of seminal saving grace if the subject of baptism himself or the parents do not fulfill their covenantal obligations in the education of the infant (*Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 313–15).

³⁴ Says Bedford,

They do not only sinify or sow; neither do they only seal and confirm a gift from elsewhere; but they both deliver, confer, and hand over to us in possession and enjoyment. And they do this as efficient causes, not as principal causes, for this is the work of the Holy Spirit. (Let this be marked, I entreat, and be stored away in the mind.) But they do this as instrumental, not as physical causes like bread and wine for nurturing the body, which preserve some of the power included in them. But they do this as metaphysical causes, of which the total power and virtue inheres only in that which is signified and correlated and it arises from the cooperating Holy Spirit. Hence is that which in the definition are called "means of receiving grace." [Non tantum significant, aut præ se serunt; Nec tantum aliunde datam sigillant & certiorantur; Sed & exhibent, conferunt, & nobis in possessionem, & unsumfructum tradunt: Idque tanquam *Causæ efficientes*, Non *principales*: Hoc enim est opus Spiritus Sancti (notetur illud quæso & in mente recondatur) Sed *Instrumentales*, Non *Physicæ*, quales Panis & Vinum ad nutriendum corpus vim quandam in se inclusam retinentes: Sed *Metaphysicæ*, quarum vis tota & virtus non nisi in Significato & Correlato hæret, atque à Co-operante Spiritu Sancto proficiscitur. Hinc est quod in Definitione dicta sunt *Media recipiendi Gratiæ*.] (*Vindiciæ Gratiæ sacramentalis*, pp. 40–41)

³⁵ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 307.

fect is imputed to it.”³⁶ This is all Baxter wants to hear — a cause that does not truly effect, but which nevertheless has the effect imputed to it, is simply a moral cause. There is no habit infused by baptism as a physical instrument.

It may seem that there is little difference left between Baxter and Bedford. Bedford admits that baptism does not truly effect regeneration. It is indeed true that Bedford, in his explanation of metonymical instrumentality, comes close to Baxter’s position. This explains Baxter’s judgment that “we are neerer much then at first I judged by your books.”³⁷ The main difference between Baxter and Bedford remains, however. For Bedford, baptism is still efficacious in regenerating all infants, since they are unable to present an obstacle. Baxter only accepts an efficacy of baptism when it solemnizes faith. In his view, baptism only conveys relative rights when the condition of faith is met. The agreement between Baxter and Bedford on the *kind* of instrumentality of baptism must, therefore, not obscure the fact that the two authors are not at all agreed *in which cases* baptism may be said to function as an instrument. Moreover, despite the agreement on the kind of instrumentality of baptism, Bedford does not give up the connection between baptism and the infusion of a habit of grace. Even if Bedford does not mean to tie this infusion to baptism as a physical instrument, it is clear that he still maintains the notion — rejected by Baxter — that God has ordained a connection between baptism and the bestowal of real grace.

BAPTISM AND JUSTIFICATION: SAMUEL WARD

Baptism and Forgiveness of Original Sin

Thomas Bedford has to bear the brunt in Baxter’s denouncement of a high doctrine of the sacraments. Samuel Ward receives only minor attention in the “Appendix” to Baxter’s *Plain Scripture Proof*. There is much agreement between Baxter and Ward; they are agreed on “the middle way of Truth and Peace, which this contentious age rejecteth.”³⁸ Ward, like Baxter, extends the

³⁶ “*talis causa, quæ verè quidem non efficit, sed tamen talis est, ut ei imputetur effectus*” (in Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 349). Baxter’s reaction to this is conciliatory. He says that he had not understood that Bedford only meant to argue that baptism is a *causa moralis*. With regard to the notion of an *instrumentum metonymicum*, Baxter comments that he is not sure what Bedford means by it. He then continues, “Only I understand this much, that you take it to be only *Instrumentum Metonymicè sic dictum*, and consequently in proper speech to be no Instrument at all, and then I need not further contend with you . . .” (ibid., p. 356).

³⁷ Ibid., p. 365.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 332.

covenant to the entire world.³⁹ Both authors take a moderately Calvinist approach.

In other respects as well, Baxter feels akin to Ward. Like Baxter, Ward also makes a sharp distinction between justification and regeneration. Ward does insist, however, that baptism really does effect the former. Original sin is really forgiven by means of the sacrament of baptism. In his dispute with Thomas Gataker, Ward continually insists on this point:

From these and other testimonies of the ancients it is sufficiently established that from the times of the apostles this received formula of baptizing infants has always been in use in the church, that they might be baptized for the remission of sins; which the church has understood thus, that by means of the sacrament original sin was truly removed in baptized infants.⁴⁰

According to Ward, baptism is a means for the forgiveness of original sin. The words of Acts 2:38—"be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"—imply that baptism itself is the condition for forgiveness: "We deny therefore that these words . . . are only understood about those whose repentance is previously completed, that it is not also understood, and must be understood, about those to whom original sin has not yet been forgiven."⁴¹ Prior to baptism, Ward concludes, there is no remission of original sin.⁴²

³⁹ Says Ward,

It is certain that a conditional covenant is made with all mankind, in a manner as it is not made with the fallen angels, inasmuch as God has promised to receive all men into favor on the condition of faith and repentance; whence also all men may be truly and seriously invited by the preachers of the Gospel to participation in salvation prepared by Christ; not in like manner the fallen angels, as being those whom God will under no condition receive again into favor. Meanwhile, I grant that the things promised in the covenant are only delivered to those who have embraced the Gospel and to their seed. [Certum est conditionale foedus pangi cum toto humano genere, quo modo non pangitur cum lapsis Angelis, quatenus Deus sub conditione fidei & poenitentiae promisit omnes homines in gratiam recipere; Unde & omnes homines per præcones Evangelii incitari veraciter, & seriò possint ad salutis, per Christum partæ, participationem; non itidem Angelos lapsos, utpote quos Deus sub nullâ conditione in gratiam denuo recepturus est. Interim concedo res in foedere promissas non exhiberi, nisi Evangelium amplexus & eorum semini.] ("Dissertatio de efficacia baptismi" [London, 1650], p. 238)

Cf. Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 332.

⁴⁰ "Ex his & aliis antiquorum Testimoniis satis constat, ab Apostolorum temporibus hanc formulam baptizandi parvulos semper usu receptam fuisse in Ecclesiâ, ut baptizentur in remissionem peccatorum; quod ita intellexit Ecclesia, ut veraciter per Sacramentum baptismatis ablatus fuerit originalis reatus in parvulis" (in Gataker, *De Baptismatis Infantilis vi*, pp. 98–99).

⁴¹ "Negamus ergò hæc verba . . . de iis duntaxat intelligi, à quibus resipiscentia prius exigitur, quin de eis etiam intelligi & intelligi debere, quibus reatus originalis nondum solutus est" (ibid., p. 101; emphasis throughout original).

⁴² Ibid., p. 106. Ward makes the same qualification as noted above in Thomas Bedford (cf.

Baxter takes exception to the way in which Ward connects baptism to the forgiveness of original sin. On a related point, however, Ward is closer to Baxter than to Bedford. Unlike Bedford, Ward argues against infused habits in infants:

In this you [i.e., Gataker] wrongly appeared to think that I accuse or reject the ancients in this respect. For 1°. It is certain from the judgement of the ancients that sanctification or infusion of virtues is not necessary for the acceptance of a child, no matter how differently the Romanists may think. For according to the judgement of the fathers a person is not accepted in favor because of any inherent quality, but because of the merit of Christ applied to the person. 2° I believe that you can hardly conclude from the judgement of the ancients that children need an infusion of virtues, in order that these may render the soul of the baptized child ready and prepared to act, or may facilitate acts of the virtues.⁴³

According to Ward, baptism does not infuse a habit of grace. Such infusion is not necessary for infants, since they do not yet have the ability to act morally.⁴⁴ Ward supports his contention by means of an appeal to Augustine: "If, according to Augustine, the renewal to the image of God begins with the conversion of the heart, then there is, in baptism, no infusion of habits into children, according to his judgement."⁴⁵

above, pp. 74–75): "God is always efficacious by means of his sacraments, when no impediment is set up from the side of the recipient; this cannot be set up by infants, however, since they are unable to give consent" [Deus per Sacramenta sua semper efficax est, ubi ex parte suscipientis impedimentum non ponitur; ab Infantibus autem poni non potest, cum consensum præbere nequeant] (ibid., p. 192; emphasis throughout in original).

⁴³ "In eo non rectè sentire videris me antiquos hac ex parte deferere, aut respuere. Nam 1°. certum est, ex sententia Antiquorum, sanctificationem seu virtutum infusionem non esse necessariam ad acceptationem personæ parvuli, quicquid sentiunt aliter Romanenses: Siquidem ex sententia veterum non acceptatur persona in gratiam ob aliquam inhaerentem qualitatem, sed ob meritum Christi personæ applicatum. 2° Opinor te vix existimare ex sententia Antiquorum virtutum infusionem esse necessariam parvulis, ut animam parvuli baptizati ad agendum promptam & expeditam reddant, aut ad actus virtutum faciliorent" (Ward, "Dissertatio de efficacia baptismi," pp. 209–10). Cf. Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 323.

⁴⁴ "Such virtues, however, are only necessary for those who are required to act morally" [Tales autem virtutes non sunt necessariae nisi iis, qui moraliter agere tenentur] (Ward, "Dissertatio de efficacia baptismi," p. 210).

⁴⁵ "Si juxta Augustinum *renovatio* ad imaginem Dei incipiat à conversione cordis tum nulla habituum infusio in parvulis in Baptismo ex ejus sententia" (ibid., p. 212). With a similar appeal to Augustine, Ward concludes elsewhere,

From this place it is clear that also according to Augustine children have the firstlings of renovation by the remission of sins in baptism, that renovation as such, however, which is gradually perfected, and sanctification are not the same. . . . Certainly, at several places Augustine appears to assert that the renovation which comes only by the remission of original sin is an adequate effect of baptism in children; that that other renovation, however,

Baxter correctly points out, therefore, that there is a major difference between Bedford and Ward.⁴⁶ Bedford insists that a real as well as a relative change takes place in baptism; in baptism the recipient is regenerated as well as justified. Ward, however, maintains that baptism only effects a relative change: remission of original sin.

The difference between Baxter and Ward is therefore more subtle than that between Baxter and Bedford. This is also apparent when Baxter quotes Ward with approval: "With regard to purifying and justifying, God is the whole cause, as a physical or efficient cause: for only God is just and justifier. . . ."⁴⁷ Ward, like Baxter, is of the opinion that God is the only efficient cause in justification. God is not just the *principal* efficient cause, as Bedford asserts; rather, he is the *only* efficient cause.

The Conditionality of Baptism

The root of the difference between Baxter and Ward, therefore, is not that Ward ascribes instrumental efficacy to baptism. He does not do this. His explicit disavowal of such efficient instrumentality endears him to Baxter. The issue between Baxter and Ward is on a different level, although it is closely related to the question of instrumentality. The contentious point is the *conditionality of baptism in justification*. For Baxter, the deed of gift, the *covenant, precedes baptism*. The covenant is mutual before baptism takes place. For Ward, however, the gift of the *covenant follows baptism*, since baptism is the very condition of this covenant. He appeals to the Abrahamic covenant:

That promise of Gen 17:7 — "I shall be a God unto thee, and to thy seed" — is not absolute but conditional, made on the condition that circumcision be observed, which is the ordinary means for the remission of original sin. Consequently, God adds in verse 10: "This is my cove-

which is to the image of God, does not begin until the time when there is the conversion of the heart. [Ex hoc loco constat etiam juxta Avgustinum primitias renovationis habere parvulos à remissione peccatorum in baptismo, ipsam verò renovationem, qæ gradatim perficitur, et sanctificationem non item. . . . Certè videtur Avgustinus passim statuere adæquatam baptismi effectum in parvulis esse illam renovationem, qæ sit sola remissione originalis peccati; alteram avtem illam renovationem, qæ fit ad imaginem Dei, non incipere nisi ex eo tempore, qo cordis fit conversio.] (in Gataker, *De Baptismatis Infantilis vi*, p. 209; emphasis throughout in original)

⁴⁶ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, pp. 323–24.

⁴⁷ "[A]d mundandum et justificandum totalis cavssa est Deus in genere cavssæ Physicæ, sev efficientis: *Justus enim et justificans non est nisi Deus . . .*" (Ward, "Dissertatio de efficacia baptismi," p. 227; emphasis inverted). Cf. Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 332.

nant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised." Therefore, he does not determine anything to be present apart from that determined condition, except in a case where it cannot be fulfilled. Therefore, the children of the Jews were ordinarily not justified only by the power of this promise, without the sacrament.⁴⁸

The condition of justification, mentioned in Gen. 17, is circumcision. Translated into the New Testament dispensation, this means baptism. Ward insists that baptism is the condition that must be fulfilled if one wishes to share in the delivery of the benefits of the covenant. Remission of original sin follows baptism.

Baxter refuses to agree that baptism is "properly a condition of Justification."⁴⁹ The reason is his fear that baptism might be assigned absolute necessity for justification.⁵⁰ Unlike faith, baptism is not of absolute necessity. It is "an accidental solemnization, though necessary *necessitate præcepti, & medii* for Solemnization and signification, obsignation."⁵¹ One of Baxter's concerns in his opposition to baptismal regeneration as taught by Bedford is the instrumental efficacy that the latter assigns to baptism. This objection does not hold for Ward. In fact, Ward does not even teach baptismal regeneration. Additionally, when he insists that baptism is a condition for the forgiveness of original sin, he maintains that God himself is the sole efficient cause.

By making baptism the *conditio sine qua non* for the remission of original sin, Ward does not downplay the role of God's covenant grant. But he refuses to accept that faith is the only condition upon which the covenant becomes mutual. This is where Baxter asserts his opposition. He insists that the

validity or efficacy of the Covenant doth not depend upon the performance of every duty required by it, or every circumstance, or accident of the great Condition, (such as sealing by baptism is,) but on the Substantial and absolutely necessary part of the Condition. When a Prince

⁴⁸ "Promissio illa Gen. 17.7. *Ero Deus tui & seminis tui*, non est absoluta, sed conditionalis, facta sub conditione observatæ Circumcisionis, quæ est orinarium medium remissionis originalis reatûs. Proinde ver. 10 subjungit Deus, *Hoc est pactum meum quod observabitis inter me & te, & semen tuum post te, circumcidetur ex vobis omnis masculus*. Ergò non nisi positâ conditione istâ quicquam ponit inesse nisi in casu ubi haberi non potest. Ergò vi solius hujus promissionis, semoto Sacramento non justificabantur ordinariè parvuli Judæarum" (Ward, "Dissertatio de efficacia baptismi," p. 193). Cf. Gataker, *De Baptismatis Infantis vi*, pp. 137, 178 for similar appeals to the Abrahamic covenant of Gen. 17.

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 326.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Again, Baxter does not accuse Ward of attributing efficient instrumentality to baptism. He distinguishes carefully between efficient cause and *conditio sine qua non*, the former being God alone (both for Baxter and Ward), the latter being either faith (and works) or baptism.

⁵¹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 308; cf. pp. 320, 359.

marryeth a beggar, and requireth nothing thereto but her consent; now this consent is all that the match dependeth on; and yet there are many additional duties, as comely behaviour, solemnizing the marriage by engaging signs, &c. which yet, if not performed, breaks not the match.⁵²

Baxter's use of such metaphors leaves no doubt as to his views regarding the efficacy and the conditionality of baptism. The consummation of the covenant grant — and, therefore, initial justification itself — precedes baptism.⁵³

THE PLACE OF BAPTISM IN THE *ORDO SALUTIS*

Baptism and Faith

The above presentation of Baxter's interaction with Calvinist sacramentalists raises several questions. From the viewpoint of a sacramentalist position, two of the most significant ones are (1) What need is there to maintain baptism if it is but decorum? and (2) If baptism loses its instrumental efficacy in dispensing grace, is it still proper to speak of baptism as a seal of the covenant?

Questions arise even if one remains within Baxter's own theological framework. Baxter holds that faith and works play the same kind of role in continued justification. Both are *conditiones sine quibus non*.⁵⁴ If this is so, would it not be natural — even if one does not wish to place baptism on a par with all those other graces — to posit baptism at least as a condition required for initial justification? Would consistency, therefore, not bring Baxter much closer to Ward than is presently the case?

To say that for Baxter baptism is nothing but decorum, however, would be a bit of an overstatement. Baxter does not regard baptism as merely an empty shell. Still, the connection between baptism and soteriology is weak. This soteriological element could well have been strengthened by the application of elements that are inherent in Baxter's own theology. Baxter is of the opinion that works are necessary for the continuation of a state of justi-

⁵² Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 327. Baxter uses similar metaphors throughout his discussion in *Plain Scripture Proof*. The listing of a soldier and the soldier's wearing the colors are but "complemental, engaging Solemnities" to the actual consent of being a soldier (p. 308); cf. pp. 324, 328. Similarly, the crowning of a king (pp. 309, 321, 324), the marrying a woman with a ring (pp. 309, 324), and the burgess kissing the book at his oath (pp. 321, 324) are but ceremonies after consent.

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 326: "Baptism is but the sign of this Covenant which should be added ordinarily; but not to make our engagement acceptable, or Gods engagement valid and effectual; but as a duty prescribed for solemnity, and for a more full and formal engagement."

⁵⁴ Baxter holds that justification is by faith alone with respect to initial justification. For continued justification, however, both faith and works are necessary conditions. See Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 293–94, 299–316.

fication.⁵⁵ Thus, he limits the unique role of faith in justification. It is not clear why he does not also qualify the role of faith by stating that baptism is part of the condition of one's first justification. This would have moved him closer to Ward. Baxter does seem to veer in this direction when he admits to the preceptive and mediate necessity of baptism. He refuses, however, to speak of a "proper Condition."⁵⁶ The reason for this refusal lies in Baxter's fear of over-emphasizing a subordinate aspect of the condition, that is, baptism, at the cost of justifying faith. For Baxter, only the latter is the necessary requirement of initial justification. One's initial justification remains *sola fide*.

Ward states,

But I deny that repentance or that initial faith, which in the judgement of the apostles was sufficient to give baptism to those who desired it, was ever sufficient in their judgement or presumption to put such people in the state of obtained reconciliation, remission of sins, regeneration, or salvation before baptism (Acts 2:37). Those who are presumed to be truly pricked in the heart because of their sins, who are presumed to desire the deliverance of their souls from sins, who are taught to seek this deliverance in the merit of Christ, are now judged fit to receive baptism, and in baptism remission of sins (Acts 2:38). But they are not presumed to have obtained this remission before baptism.⁵⁷

Ward adds baptism to faith as part of the condition for justification, regardless of his insistence that ultimately it is also not baptism, but God himself who justifies. Baxter refuses to give up the principle that justifying faith is a necessary requirement for baptism. To forego that requirement would endanger his view on discipline and, indeed, the foundation of his ecclesiology.⁵⁸ Had Baxter agreed, however, that baptism was at least a proper part of the

⁵⁵ Baxter distinguishes between initial, continued, and consummate justification. Sincere faith is the sole condition of initial justification, whereas sincere faith and works together form the condition of continued and consummate justification. For Baxter's position on the role of works in justification, see Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 257–330.

⁵⁶ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 308.

⁵⁷ "Sed nego poenitentiam aut fidem illam initialem, quæ judicio Apostolorum sufficiebat ad dandum Baptisma desiderantibus, semper eorum judicio aut præsumptione ante Baptismum suffecisse ad tales ponendos in statu adeptæ reconciliationis, remissionis peccatorum, regenerationis, aut salutis. Act. 2.37. Qui præsumuntur verè compuncti corde ob peccata sua; qui præsumuntur desiderare ex animis liberationem à peccatis; qui instituuntur ut quærant liberationem hanc in merito Christi, idonei jam judicantur ad accipiendum Baptismum, & in Baptismo remissionem peccatorum: Ibid. vers. 38. Sed non præsumuntur ante Baptismum obtinuisse hanc remissionem" (Ward, "Dissertatio de efficacia baptismi," pp. 146–47). Cf. Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 327.

⁵⁸ Baxter criticizes Ward for not requiring solid and justifying faith as a requirement for baptism (*Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 328).

condition of initial justification, he not only would have narrowed the difference with Ward, he would also have strengthened the soteriological position of baptism as part of the condition of the covenant.

Baptism as Ceremonial Solemnity

The conclusion may seem to be that, according to Baxter, baptism has no function at all with regard to justification. It may seem that baptism is a mere afterthought in the *ordo salutis*. This is not quite the case, however. Baxter makes some remarkably strong statements on the role of baptism:

Position. 5. Baptism is such a seal and means of conveyance in probability to all the Infants of true believers, their Church-membership and visible Christianity being certain: And if any will add that it certainly conveyeth these Relative benefits to them all, I will not contradict.

Position. 6. Besides these Relative Benefit [*sic*] B[a]ptism is a means of increasing inward Grace, and so making a Real change upon the souls of those that have Faith and the use of Reason.

Position. 7. Baptism worketh all this onely as a Moral Instrument, by signifying and so working on the soul, and by sealing and so conveying a Legal Right to the benefits of that Covenant, but not as Physical Instruments, by proper real efficiencie on the soul. . . .⁵⁹

This quotation indicates that for Baxter baptism is a means of conveying grace. Baptism serves this function by way of moral instrumentality. He is straightforward in stating what it is that baptism conveys: In the case of infants, baptism conveys relative benefits. This is indicated in Position 5. As noted earlier, Baxter means by this "Remission, Justificaion [*sic*] and adoption, and Sanctification as it signifieth a Dedication of the man to God, or rather the state and Relation of a man so dedicat[e]d and separated; and also Regeneration as it signifieth our new Relation."⁶⁰ He distinguishes this from a real, physical change, which is regeneration or sanctification, the infusion of the habit of grace, and the later increase of it.⁶¹ Baptism primarily conveys remission, justification, adoption, and glorification.⁶² Baxter denies, however, that baptism is instituted "for the infusing the first habit or seed of special grace into the soul; no nor for the effecting of any real muta-

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 297–98 (emphasis inverted).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Baxter often mentions these four together as making up the relative change conveyed by baptism (*ibid.*, pp. 295, 298).

tion on the souls of Infants at all, either by infusing the first or subsequent grace.”⁶³

In the case of adults, baptism does more. Position 6 states that for them it is also a means of making a real change upon their souls. Baxter maintains that baptism “can work inherent grace as a moral instrument only on the intelligent. . . .”⁶⁴ The reason why it only operates on the intelligent in this way is that only in them can baptism operate “morally by representing and signifying to the eye and other senses, as the word to the ear; And so it can work on none that cannot understand it.”⁶⁵ Because God uses baptism to work on the minds of adults, it may be said to increase inward grace. Again, it is important to note that baptism does not effect this grace in a direct, physical way, but by means of the senses.

There is some tension in Baxter’s thought at this point. He has insisted that baptism does not have the role of a “proper Condition.” He has made baptism into a mere ceremonial solemnity, adding nothing that was not already present. At the same time, however, he states that baptism nevertheless does convey the relative state of justification, sanctification, and glorification, and that adults are really changed by means of baptism. The tension is not a blatant contradiction, however. As Position 7 indicates, although baptism does convey relative and real grace, it does so only by way of moral instrumentality. Says Baxter, “Baptism I confess a moral instrument of conferring it [i.e., remission] completely, as the crowning of a King conferreth the Kingdom, which was yet his before.”⁶⁶ Again, Baxter maintains,

I acknowledge an efficacy to the uses which they are appointed to; that is, As Moral Instruments to convey relations and rights, though not as Physical Instruments to make real mutations; But this conveyance I take to be but by oblation, and solemnization, and complement of that which was before conveyed by the Covenant effectually.⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid., p. 298 (emphasis inverted). For Bedford, the promise of a new heart, though it is absolute, may be the effect of a conditional promise to the parent (in Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 351; for Baxter’s criticism, see p. 361.)

In connection with Baxter’s views on merit, one of his comments on Bedford’s theory is of significance: “As it is Pelagianism to say that the first Grace is given *secundum meritum*, (though all acknowledge Relative Grace as Justification, Adoption, &c. to be given on a condition, which the Fathers called *meritum*;) So you seem to be plainly guilty of it; For it is given (according to you) on the condition of the Parents faith” (*Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 362). For Baxter himself it is not faith itself, but only relative grace that is given on the condition of the parents’ faith.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 318.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 320.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 317.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 365.

Baxter acknowledges that baptism conveys relations and rights. In this way, he is able to maintain that only God is the efficient cause of justification. The effect can only be imputed to baptism as it is a moral instrument.

This does not completely solve the issue, however. After all, does not Ward also insist that baptism causes remission of original sin only by way of moral causality? Ward also maintains that it is God alone who justifies. On this score, there is no difference between Baxter and Ward. Ward parts ways with Baxter, however, when the latter tends to reduce baptism to a mere solemnity. When Baxter admits to a moral instrumentality in baptism, he consistently adds that it is "as the crowning of a King conferreth the Kingdom, which was yet his before," or that it is "but by obsignation, and solemnization, and complement of that which was before conveyed by the Covenant effectually." When explaining the moral efficacy of baptism, therefore, Baxter returns to the idea of baptism as solemnization.

There is a tension between Baxter's emphasis on faith at the cost of baptism as a condition, and his admission that baptism does work grace. But the tension is not as great as it may seem at first glance; the admission that baptism works grace is severely curtailed when Baxter says that this grace is effected by way of moral causality, as a solemnizing ordinance. Throughout, he rejects any notion of efficient causality with regard to baptism. When he speaks of moral causality, it is actually not baptism that causes the right to the benefit — baptism only solemnizes and is therefore called a (moral) instrument — but the covenant itself, which precedes baptism.

When baptism confers real grace on adults, however, it is no longer possible to argue that baptism is only a completing or solemnizing event, as it is for infants. In the intelligent, baptism does more. It also excites and increases inward grace. That Baxter introduces the concept of moral instrumentality also at this point indicates his aversion against a doctrine that holds that baptism infuses grace in a physical way.

The conclusion must be that Baxter does give baptism a soteriological function, even if it is only a minor one. In the case of infants this is somewhat less clear than when it concerns adults. In the former case, all baptism does is convey relative benefits morally, not as a proper efficient instrument. Strictly speaking, therefore, baptism does not confer or convey relative benefits at all; it only seals them solemnly. In the case of adults, baptism is somewhat more firmly entrenched in the *ordo salutis* because it excites and increases inherent grace. This inherent grace has a place alongside faith in the continuation of justification.

It remains unsettling that Baxter refuses to give "proper conditionality" to baptism, while insisting, at the same time, that baptism confers relative and

real grace. Even if baptism only remits sin in a moral way, by way of solemnization, the question remains: Is it possible to separate this solemnity from the actual covenanting? Is it possible to give the status of *conditio sine qua non* to faith as the entrance into the covenant, while denying this same status to the solemnity that completes this entrance? Baxter retains a tension between faith as the only condition of the covenant and baptism as a means of conferring relative and real grace. Inasmuch as he insists on the former at the cost of the latter, Baxter does not entirely escape the danger of making baptism into a mere appendix to the covenant.

VI

Conclusion

In his polemics with Thomas Blake, Baxter denies that dogmatical faith is a sufficient requirement to partake of the sacraments. He maintains that Blake's position implies a separation between assent and consent. It is impossible to assent wholeheartedly to the truths of the gospel while withholding one's consent. Baxter considers Blake's admission that baptism engages a person to justifying faith as insufficient — justifying faith itself is the prerequisite for admission to the sacraments. Sacraments are not meant as converting ordinances. Despite the pastor's judgment of charity, there must be a genuine present consent to accept Christ as he is offered in the gospel.

The background to this difference of opinion lies in the fact that according to Blake, only God's promise is sealed in baptism. Baxter insists that by baptism one enters into a mutual covenant; faith is sealed as well as the promise. In a sense, all people are *under* covenant. Christ's redemption is universal, but it is only really possible to say that someone is *in* the covenant when he has fulfilled its condition. Blake disagrees. He distinguishes between an external and an internal covenant. The former is not worldwide, however; it is restricted to the visible church community. Within the visible church there are elect people who belong to the internal covenant. For Baxter, to be *under* covenant — in a universal sense — does *not* entitle someone to baptism. For Blake, to be in the external covenant — the visible church — *does* give a right to the sacraments. This also means that the covenant of grace is only sealed conditionally, according to Blake; members of the visible church must first fulfill the condition before they can belong to the internal covenant. Baxter, however, maintains that the covenant is sealed absolutely. The promise is really or absolutely available.

Blake attacks Baxter's distinction between right to baptism *coram Deo* and *coram ecclesiae*. This distinction requires rebaptism in case it is ever discovered

that a particular baptism was only *coram ecclesiae*. Baxter, however, maintains that the external and essential part of baptism does not need to be redone if true, justifying faith was lacking. It remains unclear why Baxter considers the external aspects of baptism, rather than one's covenantal consent, as essential. His position leads to difficulties in maintaining the perseverance of all the saints, including justified infants. What is more, his requirement of justifying faith—combined with a sharp distinction between faith and assurance—leads to careful introspection to judge whether one is entitled to partake of the sacraments or not.

Baxter regards original righteousness as part of man's created nature, rather than a *donum superadditum*. This means that nature itself is destroyed by sin. Man's ultimate end was love of God and charity. Original sin therefore distorts the very natural being of man. Original sin is not just *negatio*; it is *privatio bonis moralis*. This implies that infants too have original sin and are in need of a Savior. Nevertheless, actual sins are more serious—because more fully voluntary—than original sin. God is under no obligation to punish someone with eternal damnation for original sin only.

Moreover, since children are guilty of original sin through their parents, the degree of original sin is not equal in everyone; this depends on the degree of the parents' holiness. When Baxter links original sin to the more immediate parents, he introduces a double imputation of original sin: guilt of Adam's sin, but also guilt of the sins of the more immediate parents. Baxter rejects the federalist view on imputation for fear of the manner in which high Calvinists employ God's absolute power as being entirely arbitrary. On the other hand, Baxter also rejects the denial of direct imputation as taught by Joshua Placaeus. Baxter insists that we really sinned in Adam. He limits this, however, to a seminal or virtual presence in Adam; original sin does not mean that we personally sinned in him. Baxter's realism leads to traducianism with regard to the question of the origin of the soul. He is afraid that creationism makes God the author of sin.

In an attempt to retain the voluntary character of original sin, Baxter takes recourse to a concept of "reputative voluntariness." In addition to guilt contracted by being in one's ancestors' loins, Baxter also states that parents have a natural power to choose for their children. This second line of thinking probably goes back to John Cameron. Baxter supplements his realism with a reputative participation in the sins of the parents, thereby creating a considerable tension in his doctrine of original sin. Baxter uses the concept of "reputative voluntariness" not only to underscore the voluntary character of original sin; he also employs it to defend infant baptism. The prerequisite of justifying faith is a given when children are reputed as believers because of their parents' faith.

The issue of infant baptism is difficult, maintains Baxter. It is a nonfundamental article. Nevertheless, he strongly objects to the denial of infants' church membership and to the separatist attitude that he encounters among antipaedobaptists. He is afraid that when baptism is related to election and to an absolute covenant, there is no hope left for the salvation of particular children of believers in the covenant of grace. John Tombes, however, thinks that Baxter is unable to show that God ever made a law constituting infants as visible church members. Unbelieving Jews were never part of the covenant of grace. They were only members of the invisible church in appearance. Under the old covenant, children were simply church members because of their national identity, by a "transeunt fact." Circumcision was a badge of national identity. For reprobates, it was no more than that. According to Baxter, however, visible church membership was given with creation—it is part of the law of nature. Some of the Jews were broken off from the visible, not from the invisible, church (Rom. 11:17).

Tombes also insists that Baxter's admission requirement of justifying faith logically demands an antipaedobaptist position. Baxter argues that the parents' faith is imputed to their children. The basis for this lies in nature itself; parents may fulfill the condition on behalf of their children because they own them. Tombes is utterly unconvinced that the law of nature constitutes church membership. He does not accept Baxter's position that children are "holy" in the sense that they are in a state of separation from the world unto God (1 Cor. 7:14). The text to which Baxter appeals simply states that the children were legal and that this implied that the marriage bond was legitimate as well. One of Baxter's most important concerns appears to be the justification and salvation of infants. He thinks that the antipaedobaptist position does not afford hope for the children of believers. By making the covenant of grace absolute, Tombes runs the risk of becoming Antinomian. Baxter, on the other hand, has difficulties maintaining the perseverance of the saints. If the (justified) child of a believer falls away at a later age, this means he has lost his state of justification.

To explain the effect of baptism, Baxter differentiates between physical and moral instruments and donations, and between real and relative effects. Baptism can only be a moral instrument. Cornelius Burges posits that initial and actual regeneration may be temporally separate. The former takes place in baptism, the latter when someone grows to maturity. Similarly, Thomas Bedford insists that baptism itself confers grace to the person who does not present an obstacle. Unlike Burges, however, Bedford does not limit baptismal regeneration to the elect. This leaves him open to the charge of Arminianism. Baxter maintains, against Burgess and Bedford, that God has not in-

stituted baptism as an instrument in regeneration. A child is in a *status salutis* because of the parents' faith. If the child were to die he would be granted the necessary perfect sanctifying grace. If the child does not personally fulfill the covenantal obligations as he matures, he loses *status salutis*. Bedford admits to Baxter that baptism does not physically effect regeneration. Nevertheless, for Bedford, baptism retains its efficient instrumentality in bestowing real grace in all infants, which is unpalatable to Baxter.

Samuel Ward maintains that baptism is the condition for the forgiveness of original sin, even though baptism does not effect regeneration. Here Baxter is closer to Ward than to Bedford. Ward and Baxter are also agreed that God is the only efficient cause of justification. But Baxter does not accept that baptism is a condition; it only solemnizes the already mutual covenantal relation between God and the believer. Baxter is afraid to substitute baptism for justifying faith. This means that he does not go further than admitting that baptism works relative grace, in a moral way, as a solemnizing ceremony only. Real grace is increased by baptism only in the case of adults, again in a moral way. This makes it doubtful whether Baxter entirely escapes the danger of turning baptism into an appendix to the covenant.

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